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The Epistemologies They Carry: An Investigation of Feminist Writing Assignments

Abstract

This dissertation examines feminist writing assignments as one pedagogical site that influences students' engagement and thinking. Drawing on rhetorical genre studies, feminist pedagogy, and composition scholarship on writing assignments, I argue that because writing assignments are genres that position students in particular subjectivities and carry implicit arguments and values, they are texts that should be revised for their theoretical and pedagogical features. The dissertation examines feminist writing assignments in the history of feminist composition scholarship, in a collection of 73 feminist-oriented writing assignments contributed by teachers who self-identified as enacting or being influenced by feminist pedagogy, and in one of my own feminist-informed writing assignments for an upper-division research writing course. Additionally, this study grounds the textual analysis of writing assignments through interviews with five of the participating teachers and an analysis of students' reflections on my own research assignment. Through this extensive research, I found that, despite the theoretical commitment of feminist scholars and teachers, 38% of the assignments did not reflect feminist epistemologies. The teachers interviewed and the study of my own writing assignment both further suggest that translating pedagogy into assignments is a complex process, often understood as implicit. I offer this not as a critique of the feminist teachers' pedagogies, as feminist pedagogy can be enacted in multiple ways, but to argue for more attention to the ways in which writing assignments visibly reflect pedagogies. The 62% of the assignments surveyed that did reflect feminist epistemologies highlight a variety of ways that assignment texts have

the potential to be transformative—by offering students new understandings of their own roles and positions as writers and students, by complicating perspectives on the aims of the assignment or work of the class, by challenging students to view the world in new, slanted, or different perspectives, and by re-imagining what is possible in the world and in writing. The implications, which are examined in the conclusion, are that time and space for reflecting on pedagogy and writing assignment texts are useful for all teachers, whether through TA training programs, writing across the curriculum workshops, or other professional development events.

THE EPISTEMOLOGIES THEY CARRY: AN INVESTIGATION OF FEMINIST WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

By
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in *Composition and Cultural Rhetorics*.

Syracuse University
May 2016

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Intro

Situating Feminist Writing Assignments in Composition

*Of course we [writing teachers] deal humbly with epistemology, ontology, [and] perception,
and never use these big words.*

Theodore Baird (Varnum 5)

Within writing classrooms, the writing assignment is a central classroom artifact that invites students to write—in specific genres, and for specific purposes and audiences. Whether in pedagogical scholarship or teacher-talk, teachers often explain writing courses by describing the specific writing genres taught or the sequence of assignments; assignments are thus the movement of the classroom. Often carefully crafted and designed by teachers, writing assignments help writing teachers define a course and plan day-to-day writing activities. Indeed, as Theodore Baird puts in the epigraph, teachers embed pedagogical values, hopes, and desires in their writing assignments—even larger epistemological, ideological, and perhaps political objectives. And then, when students take up assignments, as scholars like Jennie Nelson have found, writing assignment prompts are interpreted and something entirely new is created in response (391). Thus, the writing assignment can be understood as the hinge or link between a teacher's pedagogical desires and students' writing.

If this basic praxis-based argument is true—that the writing assignment prompt is a text that connects pedagogy to student writing—then studying writing assignments should ideally

involve looking at both pedagogy and student writing. This dissertation specifically seeks to better understand feminist-oriented writing assignment prompts and their role in linking feminist pedagogical desires to student writing. Contributing to both composition research on writing assignments and feminist composition scholarship, this project advocates for a more conscious connection between pedagogy and writing assignment prompts and offers teachers an array of generative examples and guidelines for doing so. Seeking to understand how feminist writing teachers have engaged students in examining feminist concepts and tenets, this research follows in the tradition of teacher/practitioner research¹ as the aim is better practices around assignment design. The multi-method qualitative study traces a history of writing assignments in feminist composition scholarship and analyzes a collected corpus of contemporary feminist writing assignments from participant volunteers at the 2013 Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference.

Precisely because the writing assignment—whether feminist or not—is so central to the teaching of writing, writing assignments come up in a vast array of composition scholarship. There is a wealth of writing assignment research in composition that offers practical, hands-on guidance for teachers who are designing assignments (Larson; Lindemann; Gardner; Reiff and Middleton; White). Within WAC and some genre studies research, many scholars have done university and national studies of collections of writing assignments in order to consider the various genres assigned and their disciplinary purpose(s) (Graves et al.; Harris and Hult; Hilgers et al.; Melzer). Pedagogical scholarship often highlights one assignment and its strengths or

¹ Lee Nickoson has explained the teacher researcher or practitioner researcher tradition in “Revisiting Teacher Research.” While Nickoson traces some of the methodological divisions among teacher researchers, she notes that the overwhelming common ground is that teacher research develops out of a “teacher’s questions, concerns, and/or curiosities” (104). Additionally, she describes teacher research as action research, research that seeks to improve classroom practices.

weaknesses in particular institutional, curricular, or pedagogical contexts (Shipka; Strasma; Varnum; etc.), or it includes pedagogical arguments for a larger sequence of assignments, like Bartholomae's and Petrosky's assignment sequence in *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts*. Additionally, writing assignments appear in specific areas of composition research, like research on student source-use and research practices as well as the variety of rich discussions regarding multimodal and digital composing practices, among many other important areas.

As this quick overview just begins to catalog, the writing assignment is ubiquitous in composition research and pedagogy; however, despite being everywhere, less theoretical attention has been paid to the connections between pedagogy, writing assignments, and students' uptake² of assignments—or, in other words, what Theodore Baird means when he claims that assignments deal with “epistemology, ontology, [and] perception” (Varnum 5). Like Baird's quick aside about the theoretical importance of writing assignments, when scholars do note the ideological or theoretical work of writing assignment prompts, it is often as a quick side-note or after thought. For instance, Irene Clark (2005)³ has observed that the social motives for contemporary assignments (such as critical thinking and rhetorical awareness) may actually be as elitist as the motives informing assignments at Harvard during the early twentieth century, when correctness and social mobility were emphasized; while Clark's note regarding the social motives of writing assignments is useful, her main point is really the difference between teacherly assumptions about writing assignment genres as opposed to student knowledge of writing assignments as performed and fictitious situations.

² By “uptake,” I'm referring to Anne Freedman's (2002) explanation that a genre may invite the production of another genre. Thus, in this context, a writing assignment as a genre invites and in some ways demands the creation and production of another genre: the student essay.

³ Clark's essay is in *Composition Forum*, and thus the proceeding paraphrases have no page numbers.

In addition to Clark, several scholars have used interesting theoretical frameworks for studying and analyzing specific writing assignments. For instance, in an early *Fforum* essay, David Bartholomae (1983) offers four “principles” of writing assignments that are mostly practical advice (i.e., scaffold assignments); his last principle, interference, suggests more of an ideological aim for assignments—that assignments should *interfere* with students’ previous thinking and ways of knowing. Other frameworks include Susan Peck MacDonald’s (1987) analysis of how problems are defined in discipline-specific journals, Kip Strasma’s (2007) theoretical rhetorical concepts that act as “terministic screens” for his assignments (the concepts of circulation, distribution, and emergence), and Carmen Manning and Heather Hanewell’s (2007) use of Fred Newmann’s explanation of “authentic intellectual engagement” in assignments. While these examples of frameworks and theoretical asides offer promising approaches to assignments that have very specific purposes and contexts, they are less suited to understanding more generally how assignments function theoretically as texts.

In *Genre and the Invention of the Writer*, Anis Bawarshi has begun to develop a theory regarding how writing assignment prompts work as genres. In his fifth chapter, “Sites of Invention: Genre and the Enactment of First-Year Writing,” Bawarshi begins this important theorization by seeking to understand the first year writing classroom as a system of genres that construct student and teacher subjectivities, relationships, and writing. He is interested in the ways that classroom genres organize and construct the ideological and discursive means that writers use as part of the invention process—looking specifically at the FYW syllabi, the writing prompt, and the student essay. Bawarshi’s consideration of writing prompts is important precisely because he opens the door for understanding the significance of writing

assignments and lays the groundwork for future research. He argues that writing prompts create subjectivities that students must inhabit and exigencies for writing that students must see themselves as responding to in order to follow the premises of the prompt and write. The writing prompt as a genre carries ideologies that students are essentially asked to make their own as a part of their writing task. As Bawarshi explains,

To treat the writing prompt merely as a conduit for communicating a subject matter from the teacher to the student, a way of “giving” students something to write about, however, is to overlook the extent to which the prompt situates student writers within a genred site of action in which students acquire and negotiate desires, subjectivities, commitments, and relations before they begin to write. The writing prompt not only *moves* the student writer to action; it also *cues* the student writer to enact a certain kind of action. This is why David Bartholomae insists that it is *within* the writing prompt that student writing begins, not *after* the prompt (1983). The prompt, like any other genre, organizes and generates the conditions within which individuals perform their activities. (127)

Using literacy narratives as an example, Bawarshi explains that even when a more complex and dynamic approach to a literacy narrative is given, the ideology that literacy is empowering is often a part of the prompt (and classroom discussions) that eventually becomes a part of the ‘successful’ student’s essay. In this way, writing assignments as a genre cue not only a position for students to inhabit, but often they also cue the ideologies and assumptions students must make their own in order to produce successful writing for an essay.

Like Bawarshi, I believe that writing assignments carry significant pedagogical power. If writing assignments do indeed cue students in regards to how they should think and feel towards a particular subject and position, as Bawarshi suggests, then writing assignments should be treated more consciously as a direct extension of pedagogy that carries epistemological power. Thus, where Bawarshi ends—writing assignments as genres create subjectivities for students and carry ideologies and assumptions—my own research on feminist-

oriented writing assignments begins. Moving more concretely into the realm of pedagogy, I believe that writing assignments should be considered as pedagogical extensions—writing products that should start from the epistemologies and ideologies informing a particular pedagogy and thus, a teacher’s desires and hopes for the assignment. In order to understand feminist-oriented writing assignments, then, in this dissertation I am asking:

- What is the history of feminist writing assignments in composition and rhetoric? When did they start to appear, and why?
- What is the role of writing assignments in feminist pedagogical scholarship in composition?
- How do writing assignments—both historical and contemporary—construct feminist pedagogy and feminism?
- What are the assumptions, ideologies, epistemologies, and subjectivities potentially embedded in feminist writing assignments? In Bawarshi’s terms, what do feminist-oriented writing assignments cue?

In order to address these questions, this dissertation research, a three-part study of feminist writing assignments, offers a multi-method, qualitative, textual study that traces feminist theories and ideologies in writing assignments in feminist composition scholarship (Chapter 1) and in contemporary feminist writing assignments from participant volunteers at the 2013 Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference (Chapters 2 and 3) as well as from my own Research and Writing (WRT 303) course (Chapter 4). Throughout the rest of this introduction, I will argue that the study of feminist writing assignments adds a new history of feminist composition to the

scholarship and expands the praxis of feminist pedagogy by offering teachers a variety of ways to use feminism to inform writing assignments.

Exigencies for Feminist Writing Assignments

Since the writing assignment is but one small aspect of composition research or pedagogical scholarship, we might suspect that it likewise plays a less significant role in feminist composition. However, through a thorough study of the history of feminist composition scholarship, I have found that feminist writing assignments have been present since the early 1970's, when writing scholars first began publishing feminist-invested research. Despite the dispersal of feminist composition and rhetoric scholarship from its origins in the classroom to the wide array of writing and rhetoric topics studied from the 1990's through today, the writing assignment has maintained a consistent place in this research: feminist scholars often include short writing assignments as practical examples that enact a particular feminist practice, or they are included as a means of discussing a particular classroom context, experience, student engagement, or other teaching moments.

Despite the continued presence and use of writing assignments as praxis in the scholarship (discussed further in Chapter 1), writing assignments are not a part of feminist composition histories, and often, they are simply used as examples in the pedagogical scholarship in which they are included. Thus, feminist writing assignments are an omission in feminist composition histories, and the theorization of feminist writing assignments is a gap in feminist pedagogical scholarship. In order to address these omissions, this study of feminist

writing assignments builds off of and engages with the historical arguments of Jacqueline Rhodes and the pedagogical work of Kay Siebler and Laura Micciche.

My examination of writing assignments is, in part, a response to Jacqueline Rhode's critique of the way feminist composition has been historicized. In *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modern*, Rhodes is critical of the way histories of feminism and composition primarily rely on rhetoric and composition scholarship, especially in regards to defining feminist practices (e.g., defining consciousness raising groups through looking solely at feminist composition scholarship). She argues that the current version of feminism and composition history is teleological, in the sense that the field's understandings of feminism (as established by Flynn's 1988 article and Caywood and Overing's 1987 collection) developed out of the Chodorow, Gilligan, and Belenky collaborative. The histories of feminism and composition position this work as developing out of a collaborative, women's ways of knowing interpretation of feminist consciousness-raising groups—what Rhodes argues is a misinterpretation and reduction of the work of such groups. As she explains:

More importantly, the nurturing, maternal-thinking woman constructed as “natural” in texts such as “Composing as a Woman,” *Teaching Writing*, and others appears as the inevitable outcome of feminist history, a metaphysical copy of the “original” woman whose presence in the past ensures, through the causal coherence of teleological history, her presence in the present. That is, the ways in which feminist compositionists tell the history of feminism in composition creates a *particular* feminism and a *particular* composition, both of which depend on their prior justification to explain their current situation. (15; original emphases)

Rhodes' argument challenges feminists in composition to understand how histories of feminism can affect contemporary pedagogies, institutional status, and even political commitments. Even though feminists have begun to develop a richer range of rhetorical histories, Rhodes' arguments highlight the neglect of alternative histories of feminism as they relate to

composition. Instead of looking again at rhetoric and composition scholarship, Rhodes historicizes feminism by turning to the radical manifestos and collaboratively written texts of the temporal feminist groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s. She argues that by looking at these versions of feminism—rather than the origin texts of the field—we can locate, and thus utilize, an alternative model of what feminist pedagogy could be.

Creating an alternative version of feminist pedagogy, for Rhodes, means valuing radical feminist textuality and subjectivities, which she claims highlight temporality, textual action, collaboration, and technology. While writing assignments are not quite the radical manifestos that Rhodes considers, nonetheless, they offer a smaller, more nuanced lens with which to understand feminist composition history. As the literature review in Chapter 1 shows, while writing assignments are indeed present throughout the scholarship since the 1970s, with a few exceptions, they are not a prominent feature. Following Rhodes' teleological historical argument—that feminist pedagogy today follows what possibilities the histories make available—the lack of attention to feminist writing assignments in contemporary scholarship can, in part, be understood as a result of their minor role within the history of feminist composition scholarship. Thus, my review of feminist composition history uses feminist writing assignments as a narrow lens in order to add another specific layer of praxis-oriented analysis to feminist composition histories—more explicitly naming and attending to writing assignments as an important element in feminist composition scholarship. Additionally, the history of feminist writing assignments is necessary context for understanding how and why contemporary feminist teachers are creating writing assignments that cue students in particular ways.

In addition to a narrower history of feminist composition, looking at feminist writing assignments offers teachers a variety of ways to use feminist pedagogy to inform writing assignments—a generative praxis for feminist teachers. This praxis extends Kay Siebler’s work in *Composing Feminisms* as well as Laura Micciche’s arguments in “Writing as Feminist Rhetorical Theory.” Siebler and Micciche both offer practical feminist pedagogical arguments: Siebler locates a historical set of 16 feminist teaching practices, like “working toward student critical consciousness,” and “considering dynamics and issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, among others” (39); and, Micciche argues for feminist theory and rhetorics to be a generative impetus that informs all writing assignments, whether they are explicitly feminist in content or not. Like Siebler’s study, this study of writing assignments offers teachers concrete ways of implementing feminist pedagogy; rather than classroom practice, however, this research focuses on the specific text of the writing assignment. While Micciche moves from theory to the assignment, this research starts with assignments and tries to move backwards to pedagogy. Looking at feminist-oriented historical and contemporary writing assignments provides an expansive look at the variety of ways that feminist teachers have and do cue students through the actual text of the writing assignment. I believe that this study contributes to feminist composition history and pedagogy by giving feminist teachers access to a wide array of feminist praxis in writing assignments. My hope is that feminist teachers will use this research in order to more consciously consider writing assignments as extensions of feminist theory, research, and pedagogy and to think creatively of the possibilities that feminism has for informing writing assignments.

The Histories of Feminist Composition

Looking broadly at the history of feminist research in rhetoric and composition shows both the consistent interest in classroom research and pedagogy as well as the growth and diversification of feminist research interests beyond the classroom. Additionally, studying this history and looking at how feminism has been historicized in rhetoric and composition is useful for locating how a history of feminist writing assignments can add to this area of research.

Feminist work in composition and rhetoric is usually historicized as beginning in the early 1970s with the first publications. While Elizabeth Flynn's 1988 "Composing as a Woman" and Cynthia Caywood and Gillian Overing's 1987 collection, *Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender, and Equity* are often cited⁴ as key origin texts for feminist composition, there were several earlier articles, including: Florence Howe's 1971 "Identity and Expression: A Writing Course for Women," Mary Hiatt's 1978 "The Feminine Style: Theory and Fact," and perhaps more famously, Joan Boalker's 1979 "Teaching Griselda to Write," and Sally Miller Gearhart's 1979 "The Womanization of Rhetoric." Many of these first few articles on feminist approaches to writing or the teaching of writing were published in *College English*, as feminism came, in part, to rhetoric and composition from English departments and Women and Gender Studies departments or programs⁵. Much of this early classroom-focused scholarship was primarily invested in research into the ways various classroom practices and writing styles forwarded either masculine or feminine values (Annas; Flynn; Hiatt; Howe).

⁴ Elizabeth Flynn's "Composing as Woman" has been cited as the first published feminist article within composition and rhetoric by Susan Jarratt (123), Rhodes (12); and likely others.

⁵ Susan Jarratt also notes the emergence of feminism via English Departments and Women and Gender Studies ("Feminist Pedagogy," 115).

Around 1990, however, feminist composition scholarship began to expand its focus. Feminist scholars began theorizing an identity politics that complicated the essentialized personal feminine values of earlier scholarship (Bizzell; Jarratt; Kirsch & Ritchie; Ritchie⁶). The theoretical movement away from the personal towards more intersectional understandings of identity got taken up through a focus on a wider array of classroom practices (e.g., activities, the role and identity of the teacher, experimental writing, digital writing, teacher identity, and diversity in classroom texts) as well as feminist research on women's rhetorical histories, textual representations of subjects, and methodologies. Feminist composition research also took up the politics of composition within the university, academic labor issues, and WPA work (Bishop; Lauer; Miller; Ratcliffe; Schell⁷). As the recovery of women's rhetorical histories surged, by the first part of the decade of 2000, feminist pedagogical scholarship moved towards how teachers were including this new body of rhetorical theory in their classrooms (*Teaching Rhetorica*). Also in the first decade of the 21st century, feminist scholars moved from the feminist postcolonial work that appeared in the 1990s to doing transnational feminist work—a shift that has also made itself present in feminist pedagogical scholarship (Dingo; Hesford; Schell⁸). Thus, the trajectory of feminist work in composition and rhetoric has diversified from its origins in the composition classroom to encompass a wide array of research interests that have spanned the last four decades.

⁶ All in Kirsch, Gesa E., et al., eds. *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's and NCTE, 2003.

⁷ All in Kirsch, Gesa E., et al., eds. *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's and NCTE, 2003.

⁸ Specifically, Dingo's *Networking Arguments*; Hesford's "Cosmopolitanism and the Geopolitics of Feminist Rhetoric" (among others); and, Schell's "Gender, Rhetorics, and Globalization" (among others). Each of these scholars have multiple publications in feminist transnational work.

Throughout the growth and diversification of feminist research in composition and rhetoric, several scholars have offered frameworks for historicizing and categorizing the different interests feminists have pursued throughout this history. In a short definitional history of feminism in composition in *Keywords in Composition Studies* (1996), Eileen Schell concluded with a reminder that “Feminism’s complexity as a social, political, and historical movement cannot be contained within fixed categories and classification schemes in composition studies; rather, we must pay attention to the local contexts and contingencies that currently influence feminist theory and practice” (100). Schell’s point is that local contexts and materialities influence practices of feminism, and thus, make defining feminism difficult. While Schell’s argument is regarding feminist practices, the same complexities constrain historical accounts of feminist pedagogies, theories, and practices. Precisely because feminist pedagogies are influenced by local contexts and materialities as well as competing and varying feminist academic discourses, feminisms exceed the categories, definitions, and origins that we use to tell these histories. Even though historical narratives are always rhetorical and limited, a consideration of the ways that particular histories have been told can illuminate both the focuses of feminist histories and what has been neglected.

In this case, even a quick look at the ways that feminist work has been historicized in the field—the categories, definitions, and chosen origins—can tell us about how composition and rhetoric as well as feminist scholars have conceptualized what feminist work is and how it has been influential to rhetoric and composition; additionally, looking at the histories of feminist composition illustrates an exigence for further consideration of writing assignments. The four histories I will quickly examine—Joy Ritchie and Kathleen Boardman’s “Feminism in

Composition” (1999), Susan Jarratt’s chapter on feminist pedagogy in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (2001), Kay Siebler’s review of the literature in her first chapter of *Composing Feminisms* (2008), and Elizabeth Tasker and Frances Holt-Underwood’s *Rhetoric Review* article, “Feminist Research Methodologies in Historic Rhetoric and Composition: An Overview of Scholarship from the 1970s to the Present”—each ultimately offer a useful and nuanced look at the variety of work that feminist scholars have contributed to rhetoric and composition; however, these histories also point to a need for histories that do more than just categorizing the larger trends in existing scholarship. This overview also suggests that the role of the writing assignment has not been explicitly studied in feminist composition scholarship.

In “Feminism in Composition⁹” (1999), Joy Ritchie and Kathleen Boardman trace three important tropes in the development of feminism in composition: inclusion, metonymy, and disruptions (9). Ritchie and Boardman’s three tropes usefully historicize feminist composition interests and motivations by re-examining articles from *CCC*, *College English*, and the *English Journal* as well as other “feminist retrospective accounts” (7). The three tropes represent the larger interests that illustrate connections and similarities across feminist scholarship; in a general way, they found that many feminist scholars have been interested in: the inclusion of women in the profession and the continual effort to include a variety of under-represented voices; the many metonymic connections, or felt intuitive overlaps, between feminism and composition, or women’s positions in society and composition’s in the institution, etc.; and, the ways that feminism can disrupt hegemonic power structures and the status quo—in the academy, the classroom, and other social spheres. While they locate their history primarily in

⁹ From *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*.

central rhetoric and composition publications, they are also clear that “much of the creative feminist energy in composition’s history is not visible in the publications” but rather, it has historically been present “in informal conversations, in basement classrooms, and in committees on which women served” (8). In the context of their own history, the claim that feminisms happen in more private and smaller sites offers an interesting aside that could potentially spark further research; however, when considered alongside of other histories of feminism and composition, a trend emerges: most of the histories rely on tracing feminist work through the publications, not the array of smaller, more private expressions of feminist energy.

In the first edition of *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (2001), Susan Jarratt defines feminist pedagogy by connecting feminist teaching practices to those of the process movement and rhetorical, cultural, and critical pedagogies (116). She surveys important research and influential interdisciplinary feminist research using the following section headings to define feminist scholarship—“Gendered Teachers and Power”; “The Politics of Speaking”; “Writing (and Reading)...Differently?”; and “Feminism as a Topic in the Composition Classroom.” Through these categories of influential work, Jarratt historicizes the important discussions and debates as including: the “feminization” of the profession and writing teacher labor issues; the nurturing mothers (ethics of care approaches) versus traditional (patriarchal) authoritarian approaches to teaching; the studies of gendered speech patterns, student writing, writing style, and genre selection; and the negative cultural attitudes towards feminism that some scholars have written about (Bauer). As a history, Jarratt’s article situates the feminist academic debates as emerging out of the larger social justice movements of the 1960s and 70s and the growing numbers of women entering graduate programs, academia, and a variety of professions.

Additionally, feminist pedagogy in composition begins with feminist scholarship that emerges from English departments and is constrained and motivated by women's inequitable working conditions as "contingent workers" (Schell¹⁰). Jarratt also references the body of influential feminist activists, theorists, and writers like Angela Davis, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, bell hooks, and others. Through these particular constructions of history, Jarratt situates feminist pedagogy as a set of debates and conversations within a cultural history of activism, inequitable academic labor conditions, and a body of scholarship that emerged from Women and Gender Studies and English departments.

More recently (2008), in *Composing Feminisms*, Kay Siebler has taken a slightly broader view of the academy and traced feminist pedagogical practices as having emerged alongside of critical and liberatory pedagogies in early Women's Studies courses (14). Siebler's history and (re)defining of feminist pedagogy emerges as a response to challenges to the naming of particular practices as feminist—challenges that particular practices are not *feminist*, but rather just good composition practices (31). Thus, Siebler begins with Women and Gender Studies and interdisciplinary feminist spaces like the journal *Feminist Teacher*. She goes on to carve out historical differences between liberatory, critical, and feminist pedagogies—noting the crossover practices as well as those that are distinctly feminist. Siebler briefly references feminist activities happening at major English and composition conferences and then emphasizes the early trajectory of publications in *College English* and *CCC*. While Siebler is able to cull 16 specifically feminist teaching themes from the history of feminist pedagogical

¹⁰ in "The Costs of Caring: 'Feminism' and Contingent Women Workers in Composition Studies." *Feminism and Composition Studies: In Other Words*. Eds. Jarratt and Worsham. 1998. 74-93.

scholarship, her main argument is that feminist practices inform many of composition's best practices but are often not named as feminist.

Also in 2008, Elizabeth Tasker and Frances Holt-Underwood offer a history of feminism in rhetoric and composition that focuses on feminist research and research methodologies—"Feminist Research Methodologies in Historic Rhetoric and Composition: An Overview of Scholarship from the 1970s to the Present." In their survey, using recovery and revision as a framework, they find that feminists have used a range of methods and methodologies, including:

Traditionalist, postmodern, and activist research agendas; theoretical and practical methods; close readings; archival studies; case studies; cultural studies; genre studies; and comparative studies all coexist in the spectrum of feminist historical research. Pluralism thrives. Guided by the paradigms of recovery and revision, feminist methodologies are plentiful, flexible, and tailored by each researcher. (67)

In terms of their own history, Tasker and Holt-Underwood survey over sixty works that they claim have "directly innovated, solidified, or critiqued feminist research methodologies in the study of historic rhetoric and composition over the past four decades" (54). A quick survey of their references, however, suggests that they primarily considered major feminist historical monographs and anthologies as well as articles from the following journals—*Rhetoric Review*, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, *College English*, and *Rhetorica*. Their intention seems to simply be to summarize and document the widest possible range of feminist methods, especially for research on rhetorical histories. Tasker and Holt-Underwood's emphasis is useful precisely because the other feminist histories (surveyed above) emphasized scholarship from Women and Gender Studies and Composition Studies; thus, Tasker and Holt-

Underwood add to the history of feminism in rhetoric and composition through emphasizing the methods in historical rhetorical research.

While this quick overview of four histories of feminism in rhetoric and composition certainly isn't exhaustive, it does suggest a few things about what scholars have considered as central to feminist work. Looking at the categories that each of these histories has selected exposes the focus and purpose of these histories. All four of these histories are focusing on the larger trends, debates, and content of feminist rhetoric and composition scholarship. Ritchie and Boardman's use of tropes, Susan Jarratt's focus on debates and conversations happening in feminist pedagogy, Kay Siebler's tracing of what she labels feminist "teaching themes" (38), and Tasker and Holt-Underwood's focus on the methods and methodologies within feminist recovery and revision research each offer a different way to historicize the interests that have evolved and shifted in rhetoric and composition scholarship. Importantly, each of these systems of categorizing highlight a variety of feminist research, methods, and teaching practices that suggests the vitality and diversity within feminist work; however, each of them, except Siebler's "teaching themes," does so by focusing on broader, larger understandings of the work of feminist scholars. These ways of historicizing feminist composition and rhetoric are similar to what Jacqueline Royster and Gesa Kirsch¹¹, using Clifford Geertz, have methodologically called "tacking out," what they explain as similar to "the technologically enhanced ability to view the Earth from satellites in outer space in order to gain the capacity to see" (72). Siebler's 16 teaching themes offer an example of a history that does the opposite—"tacking in" (72). Tacking in and tacking out are simply metaphors for the scales at which analysis has occurred:

¹¹ In *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*

neither is better or worse—but rather, ideally, histories of feminism in composition and rhetoric would do both from varying perspectives and through a variety of lenses.

Despite Ritchie and Boardman's claim that feminist composition has been informed by feminism outside of the scholarship in spaces where women were talking and meeting (8), often and perhaps naturally, these histories of feminism focus on categorizing and tracing the publications in major journals, collections, or books. Ritchie and Boardman and Tasker and Holt-Underwood all survey feminist work that is firmly within rhetoric and composition. Ritchie and Boardman surveyed *CCC*, *College English*, and *English Journal*, and Tasker and Holt-Underwood surveyed major rhetorical journals (*Rhetoric Review*, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, *College English*, and *Rhetorica*), collections, or monographs. In addition to feminist scholarship in the composition journals, Susan Jarratt and Kay Siebler also include a wider interdisciplinary set of feminist perspectives, citing feminist literary scholars' work and early central feminist voices like Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, bell hooks, and Cherrie Moraga. Similarly, Kay Siebler also draws heavily on scholarship from Women's Studies as well as feminist pedagogical research from other disciplines. While each of these histories offers important trends and new ways for understanding this history, the sites selected for where we locate feminism matters—and these four versions of the history situate feminism primarily within published academic scholarship. While published academia is, indeed, a very useful site for studying feminist pedagogy, we might seek richer histories by locating a range of materials and practices from a variety of sites in which feminist scholars and teacher engage—whether through conversations, local or national conferences and workshops, listservs and digital forums, or various classroom materials—and from a wider array of feminist teachers—including

graduate students, adjunct, assistant, associate, and full professors. Opening up our understanding of what materials and voices can contribute to a particular field's history can provide the opportunity to understand an area in more diverse and potentially richer ways.

Also clearly missing from each of these histories of feminist composition and rhetoric is the writing assignment—or any other concrete feminist classroom practice that enacts feminist pedagogies in writing classroom spaces. Although Kay Siebler defines feminist pedagogy through 16 feminist teaching themes, these teaching themes are more a list of feminist pedagogical values than concrete classroom practices. For instance, Siebler mentions among the 16 “confronting sex biases”; “Teaching with the whole self”; and “Working toward student critical consciousness” as guiding values for feminist pedagogy (38-9). Despite the historical commitment to pedagogy and the writing classroom in feminist composition scholarship, there aren't really any histories that account for the writing assignment as an investment of feminist energies. I believe that exploring the writing assignment is a way to address this omission and bring more attention to a part of classroom practice that feminists have always discussed.

Contributing Writing Assignments to the History of Feminist Composition & Rhetoric:

The Chapter Breakdown

For this dissertation, like many of the above-summarized versions of this history, I will be offering a history of feminist writing assignments by surveying central scholarship within rhetoric and composition. Chapter 1, “A History of Feminist Writing Assignments in Composition Scholarship,” traces writing assignments and feminist pedagogical values across four decades of feminist composition scholarship that grounds the contemporary study through

a consideration of how feminist composition pedagogy has shifted, diversified, and evolved. I believe that the focus on writing assignments contributes a new lens for studying the ways that feminist pedagogy has been practiced and enacted within composition. In other words, looking at assignments in this history is similar to what Royster and Kirsch (using Geertz) call “tacking in,” what they link to “the longstanding analytical tools (such as various strategies used for close textual analysis) in order to focus closely on existing resources, fragmentary and otherwise, and existing scholarship to assess what we now understand and to speculate about what seems to be missing” (72). “Tacking in” to feminist composition history to look at assignments provides a closer analytic that examines one of the central enactments of feminist pedagogy in the writing classroom: the writing assignment. The history reveals that an interest in identity issues and students’ personal experiences are two trends that have evolved, but remained throughout the history of feminist writing assignments.

While the first chapter traces writing assignments within scholarship, the larger research project includes a consideration of feminist writing assignments collected from contemporary teachers (Chapters 2 & 3), including one of my own writing assignments (Chapter 4). I believe that the collected writing assignments extend and expand this history by documenting what feminist practices look like now from a wide array of practitioners, including those who write or research theory and those who teach (practitioners). More than just including assignments from a wider array of feminist perspectives, the assignments highlight the concrete ways that feminist teachers and scholars use feminist issues, theories, practices, and texts to challenge students’ thinking and writing. Additionally, the collected assignments are representative of the

ongoing conversations feminist teachers are having and bringing to major field conferences like Feminisms and Rhetorics and CCCC.

The second and third chapters build on each other. Although I collected and studied the writing assignment texts prior to conducting interviews with the teachers, this dissertation first, in Chapter 2, looks at the teachers' reflections on feminist pedagogy and their contributed assignments, and then, Chapter 3 presents the study of the texts of the collected writing assignment prompts. The interviews with the teachers are presented prior to the study of the larger corpus of writing assignments because the teachers offer a complicated, situated, and individualized understanding of how they each define feminist pedagogy that is useful for understanding how feminist pedagogy is located in the assignment texts.

More specifically, Chapter 2, "Reflecting on Feminist Writing Assignments: Teacher Perspectives," uses interviews to compare five contributing teachers' approaches to feminist pedagogy and writing assignment prompts. The teachers' perspectives illustrate the complex network of influences that informed their individual understandings of pedagogy and that the translation of pedagogy into writing assignments is challenging, messy, and often considered to be implicit work. As many of the teachers came to new or more refined understandings of their pedagogy throughout the interviews, this chapter also reinforces the significance of explicit reflection on pedagogy.

Chapter 3, "A Study of Contemporary Feminist Writing Assignments: Methods & Findings," provides an overview of the grounded theory methods (Charmaz) and analyzes the contemporary collection of 73 feminist writing assignments for subjectivities, ideologies, and feminist content (using a rhetorical genre studies theoretical lens from Bawarshi). This analysis

incorporates a variety of example prompts from the corpus and illustrates the diverse array of ways that feminist writing assignments do forward and reflect feminist epistemologies. Through the coding, I found that 37% of the assignments use explicit feminist content (topics), whereas 25% of the assignments forward feminist epistemologies through how they position students or the implied arguments in the examples used, assignment description, heuristic questions, or other parts of the assignments.

Chapter 4, “Pedagogical Translation Troubles & Student Reflections: A Local Case Study on a Feminist Research Assignment,” is an autoethnographic account of one of my upper-division research writing assignments and students’ reflective blogs. Focusing this case study on the subgenre of the research assignment, I explore one assignment that fits Shadle and Davis’ final category for alternative research assignments, what they call “the multi-genre/media/disciplinary/cultural research project” (431). Studying my own writing assignment is, in part, an act of reciprocity—opening up my own classroom for study because others have graciously shared their classroom documents with me; but it also allows for a consideration of students’ engagement with the assignment—a central aspect of writing assignments that the earlier chapters simply do not have the space and time to consider. By looking at students’ responses to a research writing prompt, this chapter considers both how students gain rhetorical agency and negotiate new writing challenges and how my own assignment failed to reflect my feminist pedagogy despite feminist influences and goals. The lack of pedagogical connection in my assignment and 38% of the assignments surveyed (Chapter 3) does not deny the value of these assignments, but rather it confirms the need for more explicit translations of pedagogy to writing assignments.

And finally, Chapter 5, “Conclusion: Designing Pedagogically Purposeful Writing Assignments,” collates the data of the dissertation into observational findings on the nature of writing assignments, the character of feminist writing assignments, and the value of studying writing assignments. These observations illustrate the networked, heterogeneous complexity of feminist pedagogy (and all pedagogies); the multiple ways that assignments can visibly reflect feminist pedagogy (when using feminist content or not); the value of a rhetorical genre studies framework for self-reflection on assignments and studying assignments; and the connections between feminist pedagogy and a general sense of good composition pedagogy. In the conclusion, the collated data shows that, despite the theoretical commitment of feminist scholars, teachers in my sample tended to not always be conscious of the ways in which their assignments reflected feminist epistemologies. While feminist pedagogy theoretically and sometimes abstractly informs curricular choices, teachers are less certain about how to translate their pedagogies into the texts of writing assignments or how they are already doing so; thus, I argue for more attention to the ways in which our assignments textually reflect pedagogies, whether feminist or otherwise. Addressing the implications of these findings, the conclusion also presents a case for visually mapping pedagogies as a self-reflective teaching practice and a five-step brainstorming heuristic for developing writing assignments that are more pedagogically purposeful. These findings and implications are valuable for professional development, teacher training, and writing across the curriculum initiatives that emphasize the development of ethical and pedagogically motivated writing assignments.

Pedagogy can be enacted through relationships in the classroom, teaching presence, curriculum, specific classroom activities and approaches to writing, and writing assignments,

among other classroom (and non-classroom) spaces and sites. The writing assignment represents only one piece of this larger network of pedagogical activity; nonetheless, the writing assignment is a text that has the power to influence students' thinking, writing, and understanding of what is possible. Anis Bawarshi (2003) argues writing assignments as a genre cue not only a position for students to inhabit (subjectivities), but they also cue the ideologies and assumptions students must make their own in order to produce successful writing. This study extends Bawarshi's work and contributes to research on writing assignments in rhetoric and composition and feminist composition by using grounded theory to identify how writing assignment texts designed by feminist teachers visibly connect to feminist pedagogy. The trajectory of this dissertation moves from historical writing assignments in feminist composition scholarship to contemporary writing assignments by participating teachers and my own writing assignments and students' responses to them. Across this large data set, I'm hoping to shed light on how our assignments frame the intellectual work of students and the work of the classroom and how further pedagogical development of writing assignments is a worthy endeavor.

1

A History of Feminist Writing Assignments in Composition Scholarship

The challenge for feminists is to realize that connections and conflicts across generational lines are, as Nancy Whittier¹² observes, one of the most important forces directing feminism's course. The challenge for each new generation of feminists is to keep working feminist terms, texts, theories, and figures, to keep working through the stories we tell about who we are and who we were. Because modes of intergenerational relationship vary from time to time and across race, class, and gender lines, perhaps one way to work across the many lines that divide us is to listen to how those who are other than ourselves articulate their relationships to their ancestors. Perhaps in this way we can learn to link the survival of each to the living memory of all.

Lynn Worsham (351)

Lynn Worsham reminds us that generational differences between feminists are one of the challenges of feminism that should continue to motivate us. Worsham says each new generation's task "is to keep working feminist terms, texts, theories, and figures, to keep working through the stories we tell about who we are and who we were" (351). Worsham's point is that precisely because generational differences exist, feminists should continue the work of re-defining and re-learning the stories and identities that construct feminism. In this chapter, I re-examine the disciplinary story of feminism through an emphasis on writing assignments. While feminist scholarship shows the commitment of feminist teachers through rich pedagogical work, this research area has yet to be historicized with an attention to writing assignments. It would be easy to summarize this story of feminist writing assignments as a

¹² Lynn Worsham references: Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical Women's Movement*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1995.

theoretical and pedagogical evolution; however, what stands out more from this history is that feminist writing assignments have persistently forwarded the particular feminist issues and interests that continue to be relevant to each new generation while also reworking, extending, and revising the aspects that each new generation challenged and critiqued.

For this chapter, I will be historicizing feminist writing assignments by surveying central scholarship within rhetoric and composition. As noted in the introduction, the historical analysis of writing assignments uses Royster and Kirsch's method (using Geertz) of "tacking in," what they link to "the longstanding analytical tools (such as various strategies used for close textual analysis) in order to focus closely on existing resources, fragmentary and otherwise, and existing scholarship to assess what we now understand and to speculate about what seems to be missing" (72). By "tacking in," this chapter looks at examples of writing assignments in feminist composition scholarship in order to understand the various resources that feminist teachers have used in their writing assignments. To do this, I have loosely categorized assignments through considerations of writing assignment genres, the main writing purpose of each assignment, or by explaining the assignment's feminist pedagogical purpose. More specifically, this chapter considers the following questions: What feminist theories and ideologies inform and support feminist writing assignments? How are feminist writing assignments informed by larger historical context and rhetoric and composition theory and practice? And, how do feminist writing assignments construct feminism and feminist pedagogy?

In order to answer these questions, I critically examine a variety of writing assignments—whether short in-class writing exercises or fully developed, formal assignments—throughout four decades of feminist composition and rhetoric scholarship. While this history

reveals that many of the assignments included in scholarship, from the early 1970s till today, are primarily shorter, quickly mentioned writing assignments included as practical ways of enacting a particular feminist principle, nonetheless there is a consistent presence of assignment prompts that are included in this body of research (see Appendix A for a full list). Through this study, I have found two consistent historical trends in feminist writing assignments: an investment in identity and an investment in personal experiences. These interests, however, have been revised, reworked, and shifted according to the feminist interests, influence of composition scholarship and critical theories, and other era specific concerns. Studying examples of how feminist writing assignments use personal experiences or identity in different eras suggests the significant pedagogical influence of historical contexts, composition theory, and larger scholarly trends, influences, and shifts. In other words, tracing these two trends across eras shows how differently identity and the use of personal experiences can be taken up in assignments based on historical and scholarly contexts.

Writing Assignments in Early Feminist Composition Scholarship: 1970-1989

From the 1970's up until about 1989, feminist composition scholarship was a newly emerging paradigm—emerging, in part, from English literature and Women and Gender Studies programs—that was centered in the classroom and on women's experiences as teachers, as writers, and as marginalized people. Many of the early feminist publications in rhetoric and composition highlight research into the ways various classroom practices and writing styles forwarded either masculine or feminine values (Annas; Flynn; Hiatt; Howe). Some of the first feminist pedagogies attempted to locate and define qualities or characteristics that were

thought to be essential feminine traits, such as nurturing, caring, kindness, and mothering, and to bring these feminine traits into the classroom. These characteristics were in opposition to the essentialized masculine traits, which characterized the traditional, authoritarian classroom space that was to be avoided at all costs. Linda Alcoff has called this essentialized version “cultural feminism” (1988). Based in the classroom, the presence of feminist writing assignments in this early scholarship is not surprising.

Feminist pedagogy and writing assignments are historically situated and thus, heavily influenced by feminist political ambitions and composition theories. Politically at this time, second wave feminists were fighting for women’s liberation from patriarchal social, cultural, and legal institutions¹³. Feminist composition was informed by these political efforts for women’s liberation as well as feminist theory coming from women and gender studies and English literature, women’s unequal status within the university¹⁴, and composition theories of process and voice. In composition theory, scholars such as Peter Elbow, Donald Murray, and Ken Macrorie advocated for (what James Berlin has since termed) expressionistic approaches to the teaching of writing that emphasized the individual coming to voice. Berlin has explained expressionistic rhetoric as emerging in response to the surge of post-WWII college students and the elitist rhetoric of liberal culture. He explains that “[t]he underlying conviction of expressionists is that when individuals are spared the distorting effects of a repressive social order, their privately determined truths will correspond to the privately determined truths of all others” (729). This expressionistic understanding of the power of the individual to locate their inner voice and true self through writing is very strongly connected to and used by feminist

¹³ See Jarratt (2001) for a quick overview of the broader history of feminism and Rhodes (2005) for the rhetorical actions and activism of specific women’s liberation groups of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

¹⁴ See Schell (1998, in Jarratt and Worsham; 1998, *Gypsy Academics*), Miller (1991), and Holbrook (1991).

composition scholars who believed that this was especially important for female students, who existed under oppressive patriarchal forces and structures. This cross-pollination, especially between expressionist composition theories that emphasized voice and the personal with feminist concerns over gender inequality, identity issues, and the personal, can be seen throughout the era's writing assignments.

In feminist composition scholarship from 1970-1989, most of the assignments are easily categorized within similar genres and topics because this was still an emerging area of research (which means there were simply fewer publications) and because many feminist scholars were connecting feminist political values with theories of writing (which created some coherence). A trend that emerges is that many of the assignments asked students to critically consider their own writing processes—often in relationship to women's identity, including material and social conditions. In the early scholarship, I found the following three categories of assignments—with some of the specific nuances between them listed:

- Writing Process Assignments, specific focuses on:
 - Writing blocks;
 - Student literacy narratives;
 - The way language constructs identity.
- Journaling Assignments, specific focuses on:
 - Connections between students' lives and experiences and course readings or discussions;
 - Observations of sexist language in class discussions, readings, other courses, students' lives, etc.
- Traditional Writing Assignments, including:
 - Research papers;
 - Compare and contrast papers;
 - Textual analyses papers.

By far the most popular assignments incorporated in early feminist composition scholarship are those that ask students to consider writing and identity. During 1970-89, as is

always the case, what constituted “identity” in feminist discourses depended on the specific feminist communities, practices, and discourses. While activist women’s liberation groups likely each understood identity in a variety of ways depending on group contexts and demographics, scholarship didn’t start to talk about the complex array of identities until women of color scholars and theorists rightly reacted to the limited, white, middle-class oriented feminist perspectives. Much of the feminist theory (mostly) by women of color that has been influential to composition—by Audre Lorde (1984), bell hooks (1981; 1984), Adrienne Rich (1984), and Gloria Anzaldua (1987), among others—was published in the early and mid 1980s. However, there is not a clean-cut definitive moment when intersectionality and multiple identities were taken up by feminist compositionists. In the assignments, there is a mix of understandings of identity—some of the assignments that emphasized identity focused solely on gender inequality and some of the assignments in the early era of feminist composition scholarship noted a wider array of intersecting identities.

While identity and writing is the main trend of the era, some of the early feminist writing assignments focused solely on the process of writing; these assignments are usually simple, short, in-class writing exercises. For example, in “Identity and Expression: A Writing Course for Women,” Florence Howe describes a first day writing activity in which she asks students: “to write for ten minutes on their assessment of themselves as writers: do they like to write? What are their “hangups” about writing?” (33). She says that this activity is a way of beginning to address the problem of female students having been socialized to believe that they are inferior writers, thinkers, etc. Similar to Howe, Pamela Annas (1985) offers another very short exercise that primarily focuses on writing and the writing process. Annas explains

that "One of our first acts as a group is to compile a list of our own writing blocks and what underlies them" (67). While both of these prompts are ones that many writing teachers were using during the process and expressionist movement, both Annas and Howe use these exercises to connect writing as a process with feminist concerns regarding gender inequality. Annas and Howe are suggesting that because female students have been culturally and socially constructed as inferior and silent, exercises that bring attention to their struggles with writing may allow them to understand why and become more confident as writers. In other words, Annas and Howe both suggest that female students struggle to write, at least in part, because of larger social issues, like gender inequality, that have socialized females to be silent. Annas' prompt about writing blocks suggests to students that there are larger factors—social, material, and cultural—that can constrain writing; however, the quick description of this writing exercise does not emphasize these larger influences on writing.

A similar version of these quick in-class exercises can be found in Elisabeth Daumer and Sandra Runzo's "Transforming the Composition Classroom." Daumer and Runzo offer three sets of assignment prompts that are each related to a topic of inquiry and explained in the context of feminist pedagogical aims. For instance, the first assignment set is framed, like Annas', as providing students an opportunity to read and learn about women's literacy practices. Daumer and Runzo recommend studying female slave narratives for texts and then asking students to consider language use (both their own and as found in the slave narratives). A sample assignment prompt they offer is as follows: "Students could write about a time when someone changed or distorted their language. Such an assignment can also help students to weigh and distinguish between the need for women to speak for each other and the necessity that a

woman speak for herself” (55). This example highlights the early feminist focus on the political need for women to have literacy in order to have a voice in the larger society. While Howe’s, Annas’, and Daumer and Runzo’s assignments are intended to get students to critically engage with the social reasons that constrain their writing—namely gender inequality—the assignment prompts themselves (the first sentence quoted in this example) primarily focus on the task of writing or language-use.

Extending these example prompts, many of the writing-focused assignments make the connection between writing and identity much more explicit in the actual prompt. Pamela Annas’ assignments, for instance, are explained and developed for her course “Writing as Women” in three separate and differently focused articles (1984; 1985; 1987). Through her development and various articulations of this course, sometimes the assignments are focused solely on the writing process and sometimes they include an articulation of process as it relates to identity. In “Style as Politics” (1985), for instance, she explains the assignment as: “The writing process paper asks them to describe in step-by-step detail *how* they go about writing a paper, from the moment they get the assignment to the time they turn it in—with particular emphasis on the material conditions of their writing and what their lives are like when they’re writing” (69; original emphasis). The first part clearly emphasizes students’ own understandings of their writing process; however, she suggests that the assignment explicitly draws students’ attention to the relationship between writing and their lives and material conditions. Another articulation of this set of assignments occurs in Annas’ chapter in *Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender, and Equity*. In this version Annas articulates the course trajectory as:

The first exercise asks them to describe either a positive or a negative incident in their relation to language. The second writing assignment is to explore their relation to language and writing in the context of their background, taking into account whatever factors seem relevant--age, class, race, ethnic group, sexual politics, region, religion, and so on, as well as gender. We discuss writing blocks, and in the third assignment they write about whatever keeps them from writing or helps them to write, imaging a muse or an anti-muse. Some of these papers result in dialogues as they become conscious of the voices inside them that embody the struggle to speak or stay silent. (5-6)

In this chapter, which focuses on the role of silences in the classroom, Annas develops students' lives and material conditions a bit more precisely by suggesting that writing might be influenced by identity factors such as "age, class, race, ethnic group, sexual politics, region, religion, and so on, as well as gender" (5-6); in other words, the feminist theory of intersectionality¹⁵ appears in Annas' early assignments. In this whole trajectory of assignments, women's experiences are used as a source of knowledge and power in order to help female students to locate and use their voices, especially through writing. Indeed, the goal of confident, female writers with a voice is a feminist value that is shared by many of the assignments that connect identity and writing.

In the same collection, Alice Freed brought a more focused aspect of the relationship between identity and language into the classroom through a consideration of sexist language. Freed's two part assignment is as follows:

A first important step in sensitizing students to the language around them is to have them keep journals which are intended to be collections of sexist comments which they hear around them. The focus should be on sexist language forms that they hear or read in academic settings (in classroom, students' meetings, discussion groups, etc.) and in readings which have been assigned through any of their classes. Students may be asked to record verbal exchanges or specific language forms that make them feel diminished or just uncomfortable, perhaps even uncomfortable for someone else. As a SECOND STEP, writing assignments may be made which ask students to describe one of the

¹⁵ More on intersectionality in the coverage of assignments in the 1990s. Also see: Crenshaw (1991).

experiences which they recorded. This can be a narrative or fictional account of the social, emotional, or academic impact of the experience. (85)

Freed, like several others from this era (Bolker; Howe; Perry; Radner; Riemer), uses the journal as a central assignment through which students are encouraged to bring their own experiences with language into the classroom. In the second part of this assignment, Freed's interest in the "social, emotional, or academic impact of the experience" of sexist language offers students the opportunity to explore how sexist language affects them and why. While several of the early feminist contributions to composition and rhetoric were interests in sexist language or feminine or masculine styles of language, Freed's assignment also contributes to the trend of assignments that more broadly connected students' lives and identities with language-use.

In addition to connecting identity to language-use and the writing process, many of the early feminist writing assignments included in scholarship asked students to simply critically consider particular issues of identity as they exist in society. While Annas' assignment was able to move from a narrow understanding of identity to one that encompassed gender, race, class, and other more cultural identities like religion, many of the assignments in this early era of scholarship focused more explicitly on gender and identity as it relates especially to women. Again in Florence Howe's "Identity and Expression: A Writing Course for Women," she offers a brief description of assignments that are more identity-focused:

[The course] asks women to write several serious essays on themselves and the social conditions of being women. Early essays have been focused either on their own lives or on the lives of characters in novels or on some combination of the two. Usually, students have written "identity" papers during the concluding weeks of the term. (37)

Similar to Howe's very general description of an "identity" paper, Donna Perry, in "Making Journal Writing Matter," offers a journaling assignment that is generally about identity. She provides the following for students:

This semester you will be asked to think about the roles you play: in the private world of home, friends, and family, and the public worlds of school, work, neighborhood, city, country, world. You will be writing papers about these roles, but I want you to consider them at greater length, and privately, in a journal. To help you focus on the roles you play, here are some suggested journal topics grouped by weeks. Each week, use your journal to explore at length some of these questions or others that might never find their way into your papers but are still important to you. (153-4)

While many of the above noted assignments are short, off-handed summaries of assignments or writing prompts described by teachers, Perry's assignment is copied from her syllabus—providing readers the opportunity to see the actual language that she gives to students. Perry offers this journal assignment explanation for a general composition course as well as a reader-response journal that she gives students in a Women and Gender Studies class. In both cases, she sees the journal assignment as subverting the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student, and as giving students a "quiet, safe space" to better critically look at their worlds (152). Like other journaling assignments, Perry is most interested with helping students to critically engage with their own personal experiences and identities with the end goal being change (155). In order to provide an example of "change," she summarizes how one student took up this assignment: "As one white male student wrote: "I never really thought about what life would be like if I was [sic] black, but everything would be different." When he went on to consider why this is so, he was forced to recognize the reality of racism, perhaps for the first time" (155). Perry's example's focus on race suggests that not all of the early feminist writing

assignments were solely focused on gender inequality, but rather, many of these assignments and versions of feminist pedagogy took a broader, more complicated approach to identity.

The journal assignments of Alice Freed and Donna Perry referenced above are indicative of a larger trend towards both journal assignments and the feminist pedagogical value of including students' experiences. In fact, out of the articles surveyed (including Freed and Perry), a version of a journal assignment was referenced nine times¹⁶ out of the thirteen articles and chapters from 1970-89—a trend that feminist scholar Cinthia Gannett noted spanned publications across all educational levels and many disciplinary areas by 1992 (19-20). Gannett makes connections between process and expressivist theories that placed emphasis on using journals as prewriting and invention—or as Peter Elbow has advocated, for free writing¹⁷—and feminist interests in creating spaces for female students to write. She explains, “While the journal was certainly not brought into the composition or rhetoric curriculum specifically to validate women’s writing experiences, or to help women work through to their public voices and gain confidence as writers, these were, in fact, some of the consequences” (195). Clearly, feminist composition teachers were arguing for journaling as a useful way to help students bring their personal experiences into class conversations, to help students to critically understand and question their experiences and worlds, and to build confidence as writers. While each of these classroom goals for journaling were also goals for composition scholars who did not identify as feminist, what makes these feminist is precisely the fact that these

¹⁶ Elizabeth Flynn (1988) and James Riemer (1987) both mention using reading response journals. Susan Radner quickly and without any details mentions a “personal journal” students write in three times a week (162), whereas Donna Perry’s two different journal assignments are fully excerpted from her syllabus. Joan Bolker boosts a female student’s confidence by assigning “journal writing, for herself, with no corrections allowed, and no attention paid to technical matters if she can manage it” (51).

¹⁷ See *Writing Without Teachers* (1973) for Peter Elbow’s explanation of free writing.

feminist-identified scholars are explicitly arguing for the value of these writing assignments for the empowerment of female students.

In a more unique assignment focused specifically on gender identity issues, Mickey Pearlman asks students to consider what liberation means for women and whether or not their mother actually needs liberating. He describes the assignment as follows:

This assignment is called 'How I Would Liberate My Mother' or, in some cases, 'How I Would Liberate My Father In Order to Liberate My Mother.' The assignment requires a thorough in-class discussion of the word "liberate." [...] The instructor must disabuse them of that tabloid definition of feminism and substitute a better one: that if a woman has chosen the patterns and the goals of her own life, even if it is the life of a traditional, home-centered woman, she does not need to be liberated from anything. "Liberate" means "to be set free," not to be kidnapped or transformed against one's will. (165) Students should begin by asking themselves the following questions:

1. Now that I know what 'liberate' really means (denotation, not connotations), how can I examine the situation in my parents' home and ignore popular opinion? This is a question of equity and fairness. How can I put aside my own biases and examine the evidence?
2. How would I define the environment in which my mother lives? Perhaps there were and are not choices for her.
3. Does she need 'to be set free' and from what, in *my* opinion?
4. Does she need 'to be set free' and from what, in *her* opinion?
5. How would I define words like 'authority' and 'oppression' or 'choice' and 'freedom'?
6. Do I know enough about my mother's feelings and emotions in order to make a judgment? (165-6).

Like Howe's and Perry's, Pearlman's assignment starts with students' experiences. By asking students to critically consider how gender works in the social and material life of students' mothers, Pearlman is encouraging students to see their mother as a central and influential female figure—a cultural feminist trope that is echoed throughout the entire Caywood and Overing collection, *Teaching Writing*. In his discussion of course aims, Pearlman emphasizes liberation as the availability of options and choices (165) and encourages students to develop a

non-“tabloid definition of feminism” (165). Despite Pearlman’s support of feminism, there’s an interesting tone throughout that suggests students’ mothers most likely don’t actually need to be liberated. Additionally, the almost ethnographic aspect of studying one’s mother seems to skirt a fine line that could be invasive to students’ mothers’ lives. These two aspects make this particular assignment very different than the other feminist assignments of the era. However, Pearlman is asking students to be critical first of the language of the feminist movement (liberation), and then, to be critical of how they apply that language to their own lives. By looking critically at the language of the movement, Pearlman’s feminist assignment adds a layer of critique beyond the personal, which is where many of the other assignments of this era end. Despite his questionable tone and the potential invasiveness, Pearlman’s critical approach to the language of liberation does enact a longstanding feminist value of critical self-reflection of feminist practices¹⁸.

The final type of assignment that this early era of feminist composition scholarship explored were the more traditional research and argument essays, compare and contrast, and textual analysis essay assignments. Like the journal assignments, these assignments have been used by feminist and non-feminist rhetoric, composition, and English teachers. However, what makes these particular assignments feminist is how the scholars are situating them as connecting to specific feminist theories. For instance, in “Creation and Relation: Teaching Essays By T.S. Eliot and Adrienne Rich,” Mary DeShazer discusses teaching essays by T.S. Eliot and Adrienne Rich in order to contrast what she explains as Eliot’s “traditional ‘masculinist’ perspective” and Rich’s “radical feminist vision” (113). While her chapter of *Teaching Writing* is

¹⁸ See Kirsch and Mortensen (1999) who explain critical self-reflection as a feminist research and teaching practice.

primarily focused on a close-reading comparison of Rich and Eliot, she does discuss how students respond to assignments. She says:

I have found that advanced composition students relish comparing and contrasting the styles, strategies, and writing theories of Eliot and Rich, and that our classroom activities and discussions generate excellent and varied student work. [...] Frequently students write effective enthymemic arguments supporting or countering either Eliot's traditional or Rich's feminist thesis, or they develop insightful comparisons of poems by these two writers ("J. Alfred Prufrock and Elvira Shatayev: Their Quests to Name the Self"). Such assignments help aspiring writers to evaluate their own rhetorical skills and methods, as well as to examine traditional and non-traditional attitudes towards what makes writing excellent. (120)

While DeShazer seems to both announce her position as a feminist educator (121) and allow students to make their own decisions, nonetheless her purpose in teaching these two texts together and asking students to write about them is to explore a theory of writing (Rich's) that "presents both women and men with a stimulating and potentially empowering alternative" (121). Thus, through the use of a feminist author's work, DeShazer is arguing that classroom conversations and student writing can begin to discuss the options that a feminist perspective can make available. DeShazer is less interested in the exact assignment she gave to students; however, I suspect that her explanation of the ways students responded to the assignment suggests she asked students to simply engage with these two texts critically and rhetorically.

Another example of a more traditional English essay assignment comes from Elizabeth Flynn's "Composing as a Woman." In her final section on "Pedagogical Strategies," Flynn offers a trajectory of assignments that actually captures all of the trends I have noted in feminist assignments in the 70s and 80s. Flynn explains the course trajectory as:

In one section of first-year English, for instance, course reading included selections from Mary Anne Ferguson's *Images of Women in Literature*, Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, Alice Walker's *Meridian*, and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Students were also required to keep a reading journal and to submit two formal papers. The first was a description of people they know in order to arrive at generalizations about gender differences in behavior, the second a comparison of some aspect of the Walker and Joyce novels in the light of our class discussions. (252)

In this course trajectory, Flynn's aim is to use the readings to help students to critically consider the ways that gender influences language and behavior. Like many of the other feminist assignments noted so far, Flynn uses a journal, asks students to critically consider the people in their own lives, and also uses a more traditional essay assignment. While she doesn't provide many assignment details, the second paper she mentions seems to be a compare and contrast essay on Walker and Joyce. For the compare and contrast paper, much like DeShazer's assignment, Flynn is relying on class conversations and the feminist readings to engage students with feminist theories—likely those emphasizing how gender affects language and being (given the Gilligan text). Flynn's use of "gender differences" is representative of the typical cultural feminist perspective that sought to value the feminine and masculine as essential, different, and yet, both valuable.

Throughout the assignments surveyed in the 1970s and '80s, feminists were connecting classroom writing to the feminist political aim of empowerment and equality for women. Assignments emphasized connections between and across especially gender, language, and writing, but also sometimes more complex understandings of identity (including gender, sexuality, race, class, etc.) and language. While cultural feminism was the norm, there are also spaces and moments that expand beyond cultural feminism—as is the case when more robust and intersectional understandings of identity are forwarded.

Writing Assignments in 1990's Feminist Composition Scholarship

In the 1990s in rhetoric and composition, indeed in the entire humanities, there was a larger theoretical paradigm shift in regards to ontology and epistemology. Throughout the 1990s, scholarship across the humanities was responding to the new post-structural and postmodern theories of subjectivity, criticism, and power in social orders. Rhetoric and composition began to move away from the expressivism of the 1970s and the cognitive research of the 1980s to social constructionism, critical pedagogies, and the institutional politics of composition. Feminists in composition, who were likewise influenced by both postmodern theories and new directions in composition, responded by critically revising earlier feminist composition research and theorizing a more critical use of the personal and women's experiences.

Feminist pedagogical scholarship in the 1990s critically challenged the essentializing of women's experiences, advocating for teaching and research that more effectively enacts inclusion and attention to multiple intersecting identities and differences. In other words, during the 1970s and 1980s, feminist composition scholarship tended to focus on defining feminine versus masculine ways of writing, writing styles, and approaches to the classroom. In the 1990s, while gender was still a grounding identity feature, more scholars became interested in the specific ways that gender, class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion construct identities and work together in varying ways to mark and marginalize particular bodies—especially as identity power dynamics work in the classroom through the teacher's body, students' identities, and course readings and content.

The critical and self-reflexive assignments of scholars like Wendy Hesford, Min-Zhan Lu, Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald, Donna LeCourt and Louann Barnes, and Margaret Lindgren encourage students to understand the relationship between their individual identities and histories, their current local and cultural influences, and the reasons for their perspectives about their experiences, local events, and life. The critical and self-reflexive use of personal experiences for feminist scholars represents two central theories from the 1990s: first, that personal experiences are valuable when considered as situated, historically and culturally influenced, and in terms of intersectionality; and second, that personal experiences are both constructed and partial, and thus, never tell a full story.

While these two revised theories of identity have been taken up in specific ways by feminist composition scholars (like the concept of intersectionality; see more below), these ideas developed out of earlier postmodernist and post-structuralist theories that were implicitly and explicitly informing the discussions of disciplinarity, specifically in and across English literature, composition, and cultural studies. In “Composition Studies and Cultural Studies: Collapsing Boundaries,” James Berlin argues that rhetoric has a long history of defining itself in terms of the then new emergence of cultural studies. Drawing on Richard Johnson’s explanations of cultural studies, Berlin explains,

...cultural studies concerns itself with the ways social formations and practices shape consciousness, and this shaping is mediated by language and situated in concrete historical conditions. The important addendum is that this relation between the social and the subjective is ideological, is imbricated in economic, social, and political considerations that are always historically specific. (Gere, 101)

Berlin shows a history of rhetoric that emphasizes this same mission while also highlighting composition pedagogy and research that were similarly invested in what he calls “social

epistemic rhetoric,” or “a rhetoric that considers signifying practices in relation to the ideological formation of the self within a context of economics, politics, and power” (109). In Berlin’s explanation is the theoretical shift to a constructivist perspective—understanding subjectivity to be, in various ways, constructed by local and larger cultural discourses, historical conditions, economic and social power structures and their ideological underpinnings. This ontological and epistemological theoretical shift emerged out of what John Trimbur, in the same collection, calls “The very subversions of postmodernism—its disbelief in metanarratives, its resistance to totalizing schemata, its historicizing and localizing critical energies, [and] its attention to dissensus and the incommensurability of discourses...” (Gere, 118-9). The postmodernism of theorists like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jean-Francois Lyotard, among others, heavily influenced composition as well as disciplines across the humanities. This general theoretical shift was also incredibly influential to feminist composition scholarship, as the assignments below make evident.

The feminist shift from essentialized gender to a constructivist approach to intersecting identities is apparent in the assignments that were highlighted in feminist composition pedagogical scholarship. In my representative coverage of feminist composition scholarship from the 1990s, I located 30 references to specific assignments (including everything from quick references to fuller excerpts of assignments). While there were some more traditional genres of writing assignments like persuasive essays, personal narratives, memos, etc., there were also many assignments that were harder to categorize in terms of genres. However, many of the assignments fall under two main trends from the era: assignments that critically consider personal experiences as situated, intersectional, and influenced by history and culture, and

what Wendy Hesford called “metatext” assignments—assignments that ask students to critically reflect on the situated, historical, and cultural construction of their own personal experiences as expressed by themselves in previous writing assignments, reading processes, or initial interpretations (60). Feminist composition scholars explained these assignments as a more critical or analytical, and thus a more productive, use of personal experiences than the earlier scholarship that emphasized simply including students’ voices and experiences; the use of personal experiences is a feminist classroom practice that comes from the famous early feminist political agenda—the personal is political—and is a value that evolves but remains consistently present throughout all eras of feminist scholarship.

Before considering the metatext assignments, one staple assignment of feminist teachers that makes personal experience a central part of classroom writing is still the journal. The personal journal assignment bridges the assignments of 1970s-80s with those in the 90s by revising the use of personal experiences in journaling to be slightly more critical. While there are far fewer in the 1990s than earlier scholarship, feminist scholars Joy Ritchie, Margaret Lindgren, and Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald reference specific journal assignments. The earliest and perhaps most connected to the feminist pedagogies of the 1980s is Joy Ritchie’s explanation of her feminist teacher colleague, Barbara DiBernard’s, undergraduate women’s literature journal assignment in “Confronting the ‘Essential’ Problem: Reconnecting Feminist Theory and Pedagogy” (Kirsch et al. 80). Ritchie is a participant-observer in DiBernard’s class in order to explore the way actual students write through the essentialist/constructivist theoretical divide throughout a semester. Ritchie summarizes DiBernard’s journal assignment and her pedagogical intentions for it as:

Students wrote a reading-response journal for each week's assigned reading. Barbara explain that daily work is the kind of work women are most in touch with, and that doing daily work also 'keeps us in touch with our own perceptions, reactions, and responses and allows us to journey back through the course to see ourselves, our former selves, because we will be different by the end of the semester.' During almost every class, students did some sort of writing connected to the reading, and they worked in small groups to share ideas and questions to bring them to the whole class. They also participated in activities in the university and the wider community and wrote papers on these activities. (83)

DiBernard's explanation of journaling as "the kind of work women are most in touch with" is reminiscent of the cultural feminist assignments of the 1970s-80s that focused especially on giving women students a voice and considering the material and social conditions of women writing. Although the assignment is not as critical and self-reflexive as many of the later 1990s assignments (I explore next), DiBernard's pedagogical objective of viewing previous selves and shifts in thinking does align with the trend towards metatext assignments. Throughout the essay, Ritchie comes to the conclusion that while feminists treat the expressivist/constructivist divide as a binary in scholarship, in the classroom students work through a number of positions on a continuum that usually begins with essentialism and ends with a more constructed understanding of identity. Even though the assignment itself is more aligned with those of the 1980s feminist teachers, Ritchie utilizes it in order to showcase student writing and thinking in regards to the feminist theoretical debate just beginning to appear in the scholarship in composition in the 1990s.

In a later essay (1998), Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald explain more explicitly how they use journaling in order to ensure a wider variety of voices are represented in classroom dialogues. They explain their journal assignment's function:

Because our essay grows out of this dialogue between theory and practice, we have chosen to represent our thinking here with excerpts both from our journals to students

and from their journals in response to the reading and classroom dialogue. This practice of writing to and with our students is a key element in our teaching, and we have adopted it as a feminist practice in all our classes. Our journals and students' journals combine public exploration and public demonstration of our knowledge about the course materials with private analysis of connections between the rhetoric we are studying and personal lives and issues. These dialogues, between us and our students and among all of us and the rhetoric we're studying, help us avoid some of the risks of single-voiced thinking in our classrooms, enhance the possibilities for reexamination of students' and teachers' ideas, loosen the moorings on what is marginal and what is central, and call into question whose coattails we're riding. (Jarratt & Worsham, 219-220)

Ritchie and Ronald's journal assignment follows the era's trend of a critical approach to personal experiences by encouraging students to connect their public classroom experiences to their application of rhetorical theory to their personal experiences. Additionally, by writing with and to students, Ritchie and Ronald are creating a learning environment in which teachers and students all contribute to the production of knowledge. In one of the collection's reflective essays, "From Principles to Particulars (and Back)," Margaret Lindgren proposes an extension of Ritchie and Ronald's journal assignment. She suggests that for graduate students, a long-term journal over the course of study about the convergences and discontinuities between academic work and personal life could prove fruitful (323-4). Lindgren specifically points to the feminist pedagogical value of recursiveness (323-4) as a means of connecting seemingly disparate parts of life (here, the personal and academic). All three of these 1990s journaling assignments privilege locating connections and relationships between and across the personal, the public, and theory. These assignments suggest that feminists believe that there is no easy division between personal, public, and theory, and that theory must always be tested and understood as it is applied in practice.

Beyond the journal assignments, a critical approach to personal experience is most explicitly refined and forwarded by Wendy Hesford in *Framing Identities: Autobiography and the Politics of Pedagogy* (1999). Hesford's main argument throughout the book is that using autobiography in the classroom is productive in multicultural settings when and if attention is paid to the ways that *frames* (which are historically, socially, and culturally developed) control and construct meanings, perspectives, and identities. Responding to the multiculturalism of the 1990s that advocated for simply including a wider array of diversity in course content, Hesford aligns herself instead with Mary Louise Pratt's influential concept of the "contact zone" (xxviii)—a space that brings different perspectives together, and thus, contains social inequities, hierarchies, and other injustices that teachers must work against. In her third chapter, "Writing Identities," Hesford quickly references a few assignments in order to share students' writing that uses autobiography to understand and negotiate their identity in contact zones. Here are two quick examples of Hesford's assignments:

The assignment Nicole responded to encouraged students to recognize the partiality of their voices and to explore how the forces of culture and history have shaped their education. (57)

Students are invited to investigate how identities and differences are negotiated and produced in their everyday lives on campus for a unit I call The Politics of Location and Experience. Before writing their essays about the results of their investigations, students read Ruth Perry's "A Short History of the Term *Politically Correct*" and other essays on the politics of language. Maria, an eighteen-year-old student from Puerto Rico, wrote about the essentializing practices of political correctness permeating certain discourse communities on the Oberlin College campus. (63)

In both of these assignments, students are encouraged to reflect on their personal lives: their previous educations and their identities and lives on campus everyday. More than just telling stories about educational or campus experiences though (a common assignment in the earlier

scholarship), Hesford challenges students to understand these experiences as shaped and constructed by larger historical, cultural, and social forces that are specific to their identities, spaces, and time. Through shifting sites though, investigating both education and then campus life, Hesford's assignments are encouraging students to take a critical analytic approach as a larger lens for understanding various aspects of their world and why it is the way it is.

While Hesford doesn't mention assigning Adrienne Rich for the second assignment, the title of the assignment, "The Politics of Location," references Rich's likely influence on the assignment. Rich's feminist theory of a politics of location critically asks us to ground understandings of self, theory, and existence through multiple layers of situating the self—in terms of race, class, gender, and sexuality, but also in relation to national and international borders, issues, and privileges. Rich's feminist politics of location alongside of language politics offers students a complex and critical lens for understanding themselves and language. The emphasis on language, self, and identity that these assignments invoke is reminiscent of the earlier assignments of the 70s and 80s; however, a more dynamic and critical feminist critical lens has been added.

One critical-thinking-step beyond the critical reflection assignments is the metatext assignments. More than just locating personal experience as situated within and constructed by historical, cultural, and social forces, the metatext assignments encourage students to understand their own perspective—their frames and ways of viewing the world—as also influenced by these same forces. Hesford shares a critical autobiographical assignment that leads to a metatext assignment at the end of the semester:

Early in the semester, students wrote autobiographical texts that concern the role of storytelling in their families and described their histories as readers and writers. At the end of the semester, they interrogated their constructions of themselves as autobiographical subjects, after recognizing the complex ways they negotiated their identities as writing subjects in earlier pieces. I encourage students to use their writing as data, to use course readings as theoretical and methodological filters, and to consider questions such as the following: How are gender, race, class, ethnicity, or sexuality embodied in your writing? Did you construct difference as difference between men and women or between whites and blacks? If your construction of difference is not predicated on such binaries, how would you define it? Each time students reread their autobiographical texts or reflected on the process of writing them, they reexamined, to some degree, the autobiographical self or selves. In short, metatexts enable students to investigate the social forces that shape their personal voices and further the possibility that experience is open to contradictory and conflicting interpretations. (59-60)

The metatext assignment, which Hesford uses as a concrete classroom practice in order to explain feminist investments in representation, encourages students to critically reflect on their constructions of themselves in writing—their autobiographical selves (constructed at the beginning of the semester). The first part of the assignment—“the role of storytelling in their families and described their histories as readers and writers”—is reminiscent of the earlier assignments on writing process or the connections between language practices and identity. However, Hesford’s assignment moves a step beyond considering the relationship between identity and language (as is prominent in the assignments from 1970-89) by adding the self-reflective critical layer of understanding one’s process of interpretation and reading. Hesford’s questions also urge students to ask whether or not their autobiographical self, in earlier writing, relied on reductive binaries—a suggestion that pushes students to be self-reflexive and potentially shift frames and language used to talk about their identities and others. The assignment suggests that students should be critically considering the ways their identities, histories, and cultures shape their ways of reading and writing, especially about themselves.

Hesford's assignment clearly extends some of the same feminist literacies and practices of earlier scholarship by evolving the critical approach to identity and constructions of self.

Another set of metatext assignments which are published in their entirety (as would be given to students) are Min-Zhan Lu's in "Reading and Writing Differences: The Problematic of Experience"¹⁹. Lu's article was originally published in Jarratt and Worsham's 1998 collection *Feminism and Composition Studies: In Other Words*, and then reprinted in Kirsch et al.'s 2003 *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. While most feminist composition scholarship has been reprinted and historicized in *Feminism and Composition*, Lu's "Reading and Writing Differences" is one of the pedagogical pieces that seems like an exemplary representative of the feminist classroom practices of the 1990s focus on identity and differences. Although these three assignments are long and reprinted in both popular collections, I am going to quote all three assignments at length back-to-back. I believe that reading through all three assignments is useful for understanding the progression in thinking that Lu asks students to participate in as well as the shifts in the texts that she uses.

Min-Zhan Lu's assignment sequence is for a writing-intensive literature class cross-listed with Women and Gender Studies (436). While Lu doesn't provide any context in terms of whether this trajectory of assignments spans the whole semester or not, we can assume, based on the sequence, that a pre-Assignment A writing task was simply to write about and interpret Sandra Cisneros's short story "Little Miracles, Kept Promises." Lu sets up these assignments by explaining her two course motivations as using feminist texts that critically use and validate experiences and using a composition pedagogy that forwards revision in writing as a way to

¹⁹ My page numbers are from Kirsch et al.'s *Feminism and Composition*.

revise previous ways of viewing—she’s also explicitly drawing from David Bartholomae’s and Anthony Petrosky’s *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts* and *Ways of Reading* (436). Lu shares the following three assignments:

Assignment A

‘Progressive folks must insist, wherever we engage in discussions of...issues of race and gender, on the complexity of our experience in a racist, sexist society.’ –Bell Hooks

‘The understanding of difference is a shared responsibility, which requires a minimum of willingness to reach out to the unknown.’ –Trinh T. Minh-ha

For this paper, use our class discussions of the essays by hooks and Minh-ha to reread Cisneros’s story and critique your initial interpretation of this story in your last paper.

When rereading the Cisneros story, try to approach it from the perspective of the interlocking of issues of race, class, sexual identity, religion, and gender. When critiquing your paper, consider the extent to which you were able to fully acknowledge the complex experiences portrayed in the letters. Locate moments in your paper where you might be said to have taken an either-or approach to the complex interlocking of various systems of domination” (441).

Assignment B

‘As I looked for common passions, sentiments shared by folks across race, class, gender, and sexual practice, I was struck by the depths of longing in many of us... [T]here are many individuals with race, gender, and class privilege who are longing to see the kind of revolutionary change that will end domination and oppression even though their lives would be completely and utterly transformed. The shared space and feeling of ‘yearning’ opens up the possibility of common ground where all these differences might meet and engage one another.’ –bell hooks

‘Her [the new mestiza’s] first step is... a conscious rupture with all oppressive traditions of all cultures and religions... Deconstruct, construct. She becomes a *nahual*, able to transform herself into a tree, a coyote, into another person.’ –Gloria Anzaldua

For this assignment, use the image of the mestizo to locate personal-social motives for revising your initial paper on Cisneros’s “Little Miracle” from the perspective put forward by critics such as hooks and Minh-ha.

The following are some questions to get you started:

Take inventory of your personal experiences of oppression along lines of race, gender, class, sex, ethnicity, age, education, physical norm, geographic region, or religion. Which type(s) of discrimination are you most familiar with? In what particular forms? Which have you had least experience with? Why?

Consider the extent to which your personal history might affect how you enact your yearning to eradicate oppression. What particular viewpoints and forces of which you have been a part can be used to advance your interest to combat which type(s) of oppression? Why? What particular 'familiar' viewpoints and privileges must be surrendered for you to end which type(s) of oppression? Why? Which foreign ways of seeing and thinking might you need to make yourself vulnerable to? Why?

Examine the ways in which your personal history might have affected your ability to attend to the interlocking of all forms of oppression when you approached differences, such as reading Cisneros's "Little Miracle" in your original paper. For example, how have your experiences in certain forms of oppression enabled you to relate to certain aspects of the text? How has your (lack of) experience in other forms of oppression kept you from engaging with other aspects of the text?

As someone yearning to end discrimination and transform yourself, how might you revise your reading of Cisneros's "Little Miracle" so that your immediate interest in ending particular form(s) of oppression could enhance your interest in rather than keep you from deconstructing other form(s) of oppression operating in society and portrayed in Cisneros's text?" (442-3).

Assignment C

For this assignment, use the thoughts you have generated doing the last two assignments to write a revision of your original paper on Cisneros's "Little Miracle." When you have finished your revision, comment on a separate sheet of paper about your experience in doing this sequence of assignments. How would you characterize the use of personal experience in this process? How many directions did you take? Which of these directions do you find necessary but difficult? Why? How did you go about overcoming such difficulties?" (445).

One of the feminist concerns of the 1990s was that all aspects of identity were critically considered in their relationship to how particular people and bodies are marginalized and oppressed. This particular concern developed out of the 1970s-80s focus on gender at the exclusion of other central factors like race, class, ethnicity, religion, etc; in response, feminist women of color theorists and scholars, especially in the women's liberation movement, law,

and critical race theory, developed more dynamic and complex understanding of identities. bell hooks, for instance, has explained this idea as “interlocking systems of domination—sex, race, and class” (21). Coming out of law, Kimberle Crenshaw coined the concept of “intersectionality” as highlighting “the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed” (2). Min-Zhan Lu’s assignment sequence is responding to this specific feminist anxiety by encouraging students to revise their own understanding of identity. The assignments work from the initial assumption that all students will need to revise their approach to identity in order to be capable of a critical and analytical approach to experience. However, Lu’s framing of each assignment’s new self-reflexive challenge through very specific and different feminist writers’ perspectives suggests that understandings of identities are complex and shift with new theoretical lenses.

For Assignment A, Min-Zhan Lu asks students to use bell hooks and Trinh T. Minh-ha (and class discussions) as a lens for rereading a story and critiquing their initial interpretations of the story. As soon as students have begun to interpret, Lu challenges them to take a much more complex and dynamic approach to identity. In other words, rather than adding one aspect of identity at a time (i.e., one week on gender, one week on race, etc.), Lu challenges students to grapple with the complexity of a fuller view of identity right from the start. Like Hesford’s metatext and framing assignment questions, Lu also pushes students to think beyond the limits of binaries. Precisely because the focus of Lu’s argument is this sequence of assignments, after each assignment she offers a clear sense of the feminist value in each assignment. Of Assignment A, Lu says, “it [the assignment] asks students to become more self-conscious about the ways in which their interest in combating one particular form of oppression might delimit—

enable as well as prevent them from reading-writing differences” (441). Lu is clearly arguing that students need to be taught to evaluate their own understanding of identity and then revise it to encompass a wider understanding of it; this feminist value is echoed in the specific quotes she uses to frame the assignment with, too.

If Assignment A asks students to critically reflect (using hooks and Minh-ha) on their reading and interpreting practices, than Assignment B asks them to critically reflect on why they might desire (or not?) to fight particular forms of oppression. Specifically, Lu says “use the image of the mestizo to locate personal-social motives for revising your initial paper on Cisneros’s “Little Miracle”” (442). Still drawing on hooks and Minh-ha, Lu’s framing quotes suggest that social transformations can be attained after locating what needs to be deconstructed (Anzaldua) and working from a space of yearning created by a desire to end oppression (hooks). Looking closely at the distinction Lu is making between these two assignments, Assignment A doesn’t necessarily ask students to engage with their own experiences; while students could still potentially use their own experiences, Lu’s prompt for Assignment A focuses more on the relationship between the theoretical lenses (hooks and Minh-ha) and students’ first text (their initial response to the Cisneros story). Lu’s questions point more to the gaps students could locate in their writing that highlight a limited understanding of identity. Assignment B, however, is more clearly a metatext and asks students to be more self-reflexive by critically considering their motives. The guiding questions that follow Assignment B point more clearly to students’ own experiences with oppression, family histories, identities, and even values. I believe this distinction between these first two assignments is central because Lu doesn’t ask students to engage with their own experiences

until they have a more theoretical, well-rounded, and critical understanding of identity, one informed especially from feminist texts. Therefore, students have begun to locate holes in their thinking and writing and understand the reasons for those partial perspectives.

Finally, for Assignment C, students are asked to go back to their very first paper, which has been used by students as data that is representative of their initial thinking, and revise it with a new perspective on identity, oppression, and themselves. Alongside of actually revising their first paper, students are also asked to write a reflection that characterizes how they think they've used experience in this assignment sequence (445). In order to set up Assignment C, Lu explains, "Revision assignments should be followed by an assignment that asks students to theorize the critical use of experience they have enacted so that they can more self-consciously employ this method in the future and outside the classroom" (445). What Lu is suggesting is that her sequence of assignments makes a particular argument for a particular method of revision that is critical for understanding experiences, writing, and thinking in the world. When understood as a method, her assignments suggest that critical revision occurs as a process: engage with and interpret a text; use another perspective (via texts) to critically study initial interpretations; use new perspective to critically consider the self (identity, experience with oppression, family history, etc.) and the reasons for one's initial motives; and finally, return to the initial text and revise it. Through this revision-based process, Lu not only provides students with an effective method of revision, but also an effective method for changing one's perspective and thinking.

After sharing this sequence, Lu comments, "The feminist project of making experience work on both the experiential and analytic levels is particularly valuable in combating the

hegemony of neo-conservative rhetoric, because of feminism's continual emphasis on the primacy of firsthand knowledge" (446). Connecting a revision-based writing sequence with feminist goals, Lu's understanding of the feminist value is that experience can be used to deconstruct hegemonic and neo-conservative rhetorics. While deconstructing hegemonic power structures and discourses develops out of postmodern theories (especially Derrida), feminist politics aligned with this desire to deconstruct oppressive social forces. Thus, Lu connects deconstructing hegemonic and neo-conservative power structures as a layer to the feminist pedagogical trends of the 90s: valuing experiences as situated, constructed, and as studied through various critical lenses; understanding language's role in constructions of self and language's power in naming; and, deconstructing oppressive hegemonic discourses and structures.

In addition to the critical approaches to the personal and metatext assignments, throughout the 1990s there are also a number of assignments that are quickly referenced for a variety of purposes—including sharing difficult classroom experiences, explaining a course trajectory, and in order to offer concrete classroom practices for enacting feminist pedagogical theories and values. While these quick references are too short and general to really categorize, there are still some trends. The first trend is that there are a few quick references to assignments that have been intentionally left vague or general in order to encourage students to be creative and experiment with writing forms, styles, and genre. For example, in "Discourse and Diversity: Experimental Writing Within the Academy," Lillian Bridwell-Bowles argues that students need opportunities to write in more expansive, non-academic discourse. To do so, she simply challenges students to experiment:

This ongoing process has made me realize that students may need new options for writing if they, too, are struggling with expressing concepts, attitudes, and beliefs that do not fit into traditional academic forms. To give them permission to experiment, I simply tell them that they need not always write the “standard academic essay” and encourage them to write something else. Many continue to write in familiar forms, and I do not require that they do otherwise. They may need to adopt the standard conventions before they can challenge or criticize them (see Bizzell for an account of this position). But increasing numbers of students take me up on my option and learn ways of critically analyzing rhetorical conventions at the same time that they are being introduced to traditional academic discourse communities. (Kirsch et al. 295)

Bridwell-Bowles’ description of the assignment suggests that she simply tells students to respond to a particular topic and that all writing decisions are up to them. While she advocates in the article for what she calls feminist discourse, she is also clear that she leaves room for students to do whatever experimenting (or not) they choose. Similarly, Michelle Payne shares a very general trajectory of writing assignments that ends with a “general assignment” in “Rend(er)ing Women’s Authority in the Writing Classroom” (Kirsch et al. 406-7); her class description suggests that “general assignments” is meant to give freedom to students to democratically (as a class) make choices about assignments. Both of these assignments seek to empower students through giving them the agency to make decisions—about their writing and collectively about assignments.

A final trend in quickly referenced 1990s writing assignments include more traditional writing assignments that are focused on particular writing skills and or texts. For instance, when exploring the difficulties students have when the textual subject matter involves race, Shirley Wilson Logan shares two references to fairly traditional writing assignments. First, she asks students to write a rhetorical analysis of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (Kirsch et al. 430), and she also shares an in-class writing exercise that asks students to listen to

Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" and describe the stylistic features using book 4 of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Kirsch et al. 431). Additionally, in "A Symposium on Feminist Experiences in the Composition Classroom," Karen Powers-Stubs shares a first year writing course that includes this sequence of assignments: "Following two personal narrative assignments and one persuasive assignment dealing with campus issues, my fourth writing assignment asked students to write an argument dealing with a minority concern" (Kirsch et al. 378). Whether Shirley Wilson Logan's use of King's letter or Douglass's speech or Powers-Stubbs' focus on "a minority concern," these assignments are primarily asking students to engage with a specific form of analysis and writing using a specific text(s). Both of these authors, however, bring a feminist perspective to the assignments through their interest in issues of race and discrimination. Whether through focusing on specific texts (Wilson Logan) or a specific set of identity issues (Powers-Stubbs), feminist teachers bring important issues of identity, equality, and social justice to the fore in both classroom discussions and writing assignments.

Despite the dominance of very short references to assignments, a few feminist pedagogical values seem evident throughout the assignments from the 1990s. In her reflective essay, Margaret Lindgren summarizes Harriet Malinowitz in a way that I think speaks to and locates the connecting feminist pedagogical values in the 1990s scholarship. Lindgren says, "Malinowitz identifies what seems to me a uniquely feminist attitude when she reminds us that the 'goal of feminist education has never been to prepare students to participate in the world as it exists; the goal, rather, has been to help them develop the skills to deconstruct and transform that world.'" (327; Malinowitz 310). While not all of the assignments did both—

challenging students to deconstruct *and* transform their worlds—most of them at least asked students to deconstruct their normative perspectives and experiences. The most exemplary often did both, like Lu’s insistence that students not only deconstruct how and why they understand their responses but that they then also can use this analytical method to transform the way they read and respond in other situations.

21st Century Writing Assignments in Feminist Composition Scholarship

The main trends in feminist writing assignments in the 1990s include an emphasis on critical, self-reflexive approaches to writing and revising personal experiences, understanding identity issues as constructed by historical, cultural, and social discourses and experiences, and deconstructing oppressive hegemonic discourses and structures. In the 21st century writing assignments, there is less consistency in genres and purposes, in part, because feminist rhetoric and composition scholarship has continued the diversification of interests and scholars are continuing to refine newer theories and approaches; this can be seen, partly, through a wealth of publications—collections of primary feminist rhetorics, anthologies of landmark feminist scholarship, and more individually published feminist monographs. Major feminist rhetoric and composition collections like *Available Means* (2001), *Feminism and Composition* (2003), *Teaching Rhetorica* (2006), *Walking Talking Feminist Rhetorics* (2010), and *Rhetorica in Motion* (2010) (among others) suggest not only the variety of research but also the strength with which feminists are publishing. In addition to the variety of collections, numerous important feminist monographs have appeared in the most recent era of feminist scholarship, including Royster’s *Traces of a Stream* (2000), Jacqueline Rhodes’ *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency*

(2005), Kay Siebler's *Composing Feminisms* (2007), Julie Jung's *Revisionary Rhetoric, Feminist Pedagogy, and Multigenre Texts* (2005), and Rebecca Dingo's *Networking Arguments* (2012) among other important works. Indeed, many of the introductions and forwards to these collections reference the contemporary wealth of feminist scholarship and collections as a sort of arrival for feminist research in rhetoric and composition. Throughout these works (and others not mentioned) in this era, feminist rhetoric and composition scholars are continuing historical recovery research on women's rhetorics, refining and expanding transnational feminisms, expanding feminist rhetorical and composition research interests, and explicitly connecting all of these areas to feminist pedagogies and classroom practices.

Throughout the scholarship I surveyed in the 2000s, I continued to locate quick references to and longer detailed writing assignments. As might be expected with the rich array of feminist rhetoric and composition research of the era, there are less apparent trends than in the 70s, 80s, and 90s feminist writing assignments. There are, of course, a number of fairly quick references to traditional writing assignments like rhetorical analyses, close readings, or responses to feminist texts (Daniell; Jung; Pough; Wolters Hinshaw). There are also some assignments that explicitly engage students with new and revised versions of feminist rhetorical research (Helmets; Middleton; Jung; Schell), and there are also a few assignments by feminist teachers that really strive to more explicitly connect feminist theory to practice (Micciche; Ratcliffe). Calling this more explicit attention and connection between theory and practice in writing assignments a trend seems like a critique of earlier feminist composition scholarship; thus, I do want to be clear that feminist pedagogy and feminist writing assignments have always worked to connect theory to practice—explicitly, too! However, in a few of the feminist

writing assignments in the 2000s, the connection between theory and practice is also a key part of the argument. As Krista Ratcliffe explains:

For theory does not smoothly translate into pedagogy any more than pedagogy easily generates theories. Indeed, before a theory can be performed in a classroom, it must be interpreted by an instructor, whose politics of location not only helps her see pedagogical possibilities within a theory but also blinds her to other possibilities. During this interpretive process, a theory is conflated with an instructor's other identifications and disidentifications; hence, what an instructor imagines as a theory enacted in his classroom is actually his own version of that theory translated into the classroom in a particular way. (Ratcliffe 40)

Ratcliffe's attention to the complexities of bringing feminist theories into practice is in some ways a larger interest of 2000s feminist rhetoric and composition scholarship precisely because as feminist scholarship is growing and diversifying, there is a natural self-reflexive interest in re-examining the ways that theories are turned into practice. While there is not a concrete trend like the 1990s interest in critical and self-reflexive personal writing, there are still smaller similarities across the roughly 18 assignments I surveyed.

Like earlier eras of feminist composition scholarship, there are some shorter references that offer quick glimpses of feminist writing assignments. Wendy Wolters Hinshaw, for instance, references quickly a close-reading assignment of Gloria Anzaldua's theory of borderlands (271). Beth Daniell's doesn't share specific texts, but she references two "borrowed" assignments: a textual response paper activity where students spend a class reading their papers out loud for discussion purposes (90) and, an introduction reflection paper on their final response paper folder (91). Another example of this type of assignment is Gwendolyn Pough's two in-class writing assignments she references in "Each One, Pull One": Womanist Rhetoric and Black Feminist Pedagogy in the Writing Classroom." Pough shares:

I came to the next class meeting with an in-class writing assignment typed, photocopied, and ready to hand out. The students had twenty minutes to complete the assignment, which read, “Look for elements of ‘Love of the People’ in Margaret Walker’s ‘For My People’ and Alice Walker’s ‘Each One, Pull One.’” I gave the assignment with the suggestion that they look at the different images and other strategies the two writers use to express their love of the people. In short, I informed them that they would be comparing and contrasting the two poems. The written responses I received were a variety of comments that seemed to center on how negative and angry Alice Walker’s poem was and how positive and happy Margaret Walker’s poem was. (76)

Wolters Hinshaw’s close-reading assignment, Daniell’s shared responses and responses folder reflection, and Pough’s in-class focused compare and contrast assignments are all fairly common text-based writing assignments in the sense that they might be found in any text-based writing classroom. However, we can locate their feminist pedagogical values in how they discuss using them—and, rhetorically, why they reference them. Hinshaw and Pough, for instance, both focus their assignments on feminist texts by women of color; work by Gloria Anzaldua and Alice Walker have been mainstays in many feminist classrooms. Additionally, though, Pough discusses these in-class writing assignments in order to discuss her students’ affective resistance to womanist rhetorics, multiple oppressions, and her intersectionality as a black feminist teacher. Pough shares that despite initial resistance, a number of her students wrote longer essays on this short in-class assignment precisely because they were challenged to critically consider the limitations of their own arguments. In response, Pough asks students to do another similar in-class writing assignment precisely because she was “even more determined to have all [her] students try to combat their negative readings” (79). Pough’s discussion of her use of these assignments and her determination are a central part of her womanist black feminist pedagogy and echo Harriet Malinowitz’s earlier referenced claim that

feminist pedagogy involves helping students learn the skills to deconstruct and transform their worlds (Lindgren 327).

Another set of shorter 21st century assignments are ones that introduce new feminist theories into the classroom or that refine existing ones. For instance, Marguerite Helmers makes a case for feminists to consider material rhetorics. In doing so, she very quickly references “an assignment that asked students to find their own special object and to share it with the class” in order to critically consider her own stereotyping of one student’s chosen object (115). Like Pough’s, Wolters Hinshaw’s, and Daniell’s assignments, Helmers’ object-based assignment isn’t particularly new; however, her critical interrogation of her own judgment of her student’s sneakers as cliché highlights a feminist teacher’s critical self-reflexive teaching practices and engagement with new rhetorical theories to enhance the feminist classroom. Additionally, Helmers’ focus on materiality is a theme that has run through feminist writing assignments of earlier eras; feminist teachers have often challenged students to critically reflect on their material circumstances in order to understand the relationship between writing, identity, and larger material, social, and cultural influences. Helmers’ assignment to bring in influential objects forwards and extends these earlier more theoretical feminist interests.

Other scholars, like Joyce Middleton, Eileen Schell, and Julie Jung have offered assignments that connect extensions of feminist theories to classroom practice. Middleton, for instance, extends discussions of race by arguing for “race matters rhetoric” that pays equal attention to the raced subject (which traditional racial analyses do) and the racializer (which she adds to the discussion). In “Toni Morrison and ‘Race Matters’ Rhetoric: Reading Race and

Whiteness in Visual Culture,” Middleton offers a quick example of a writing assignment that enacts “race matters” rhetoric; she suggests “...a writing assignment that interrupts students’ traditional and historical thinking about race by asking them to develop an essay on the dominating effects of slavery on white people after reading Douglass’s *Narrative* or any slave narrative for the first time” (245). Middleton’s purpose is simply to offer a concrete practice for bringing her extension of racial theories into the classroom. By embedding a more complex understanding of race into the assignment—one that insists that everyone is raced and everyone is effected by all issues of race—Middleton is drawing from and extending critical race theories and feminist theories of identity.

While Middleton brings a more robust theory of race into her assignments, Eileen Schell offers some in-class activities that concretely connect transnational labor issues to students’ everyday lives. In “Gender, Rhetorics, and Globalization: Rethinking the Spaces and Locations of Feminist Rhetorics and Women’s Rhetorics in Our Field,” Schell discusses why she brings sweatshop labor practices as a case study into many of her classes; she explains, “My point in raising the issue of sweatshop labor in my classes and, by connection, subcontracting on university campuses, whether I am teaching a course on women’s rhetorics, feminist rhetorics, or first-year writing for that matter, is to provide students with a case study of globalization that highlights “transnational linkages” and multinational and multilocal approaches to the question of gender and feminisms” (172). Schell’s attention to the value of teaching transnational labor issues across a wide variety of classes emphasizes her conscious attention to bringing a feminist literacy into all of her teaching. Offering an innovative in-class activity, Schell says:

I introduce my students to the issue of sweatshop labor by the simple exercise of asking them to read the labels on class members' clothing and to record where their garments were manufactured. A discussion of this activity then leads to students' investigating where and under what conditions such clothing is produced. Inevitably, our discussion leads to free trade zones and to the global and gendered work force in the garment industry. To illustrate the issues and concerns of garment workers worldwide, I show the documentary *Free Trade Slaves*, a Belgian-made film, which narrates the establishment of free trade zones throughout the world. [...] Focusing a course on an issue that cuts across national borders also challenges us to look beyond United States-centric scholarly print articles or books, which may not be up to date on transnational issues and may not offer graphics or pictorial representations that portray the sweatshop pyramid. (170)

While Eileen Schell and other feminist scholars (Bloom; Enos; Holbrook; Lauer; Miller) have been tackling labor issues in the discipline in their scholarship since the early 1990s (likely research that began in the 1980s), this pedagogical chapter is really the first writing assignment that is published that argues for bringing transnational labor concerns into the classroom. Schell's larger argument is that to truly engage feminist rhetorics in transnational contexts, we must consider rhetorical location, rhetorical action, and rhetorical education for citizenship (167-8). She argues transnational issues are central to feminist work and cannot be simply added into the positionality mix. In this assignment, she's forwarding feminist theories and interests by challenging students to be accountable for their own connections and support of sweatshop labor practices in the transnational garment industry. Students are challenged to become familiar with a feminist concern (sweatshop labor practices), to connect their own consumer habits with these inhumane labor practices, to understand connections between the local and global, to critically engage with a more diverse range of non-Western scholarship on these issues, and to locate and connect with other students taking actions on these issues. Beyond integrating transnational labor issues and global connections into the classroom, Schell

is also asking students to be responsible for their choices as consumers—choices that have international economic and human rights ramifications.

While Middleton extends methods of understanding and analyzing race and Schell clarifies and extends feminist transnational analytical practices, Julie Jung argues for an altogether new and feminist understanding of revision. In Julie Jung's 2005 *Revisionary Rhetoric, Feminist Pedagogy, and Multigenre Texts*, she shares three writing assignments—one fully developed reflective multigenre assignment for English majors and then two quick references to a writing prompt and more substantial revision project for a graduate writing course on publishing (these are in her fifth chapter). Here, I'd like to closely examine her more fully developed multigenre reflection assignment. Jung's assignment follows and extends the legacy of the 1990s feminist writing assignments that offered a more critical and situated understanding of personal experiences and perspectives. For her larger project, Jung re-theorizes revision to mean an intentional delaying of clarification in order to hear and understand differences (3). As she sets up her multigenre reflective narrative assignment, she situates her understanding of reflective writing as developing from Min-Zhan Lu's critique of using the personal for what Jung calls "revelation or guilt-ridden self-critique" (58). Jung is thus extending the critical work of Hesford and Lu on personal and reflective writing and re-theorizing revision altogether. I'd like to share Jung's full writing assignment as she shares it in her appendix precisely because so few of the writing assignments examined thus far are shared in their entirety. Thus, the following assignment, titled "English 300 Seminar Project," is as students would receive it:

Brief Review (from your syllabus)

Due at the time of the scheduled final exam, your *Seminar Project* represents the conceptual (rather than material) culmination of your work as an English major. In it you will situate selected texts you've already produced within an interpretive framework—an introductory essay and a concluding essay—that makes personal, institutional, and theoretical (dis)connections across them.

Some Specifics

You are required to produce at least fifteen pages of new prose; students who earn an A will produce at least twenty pages. As we discussed in class, you can divide this requirement in half, using eight or so pages for your introduction and eight for your conclusion. You can also divide the requirement into smaller sections, although be advised that it can be difficult to develop the level of theoretical and reflective complexity I'm expecting in shorter pieces.

Tips

Gather all the writing you have produced as an English major in a department committed to an English studies model and make (dis)connections across those texts. Analyze how you are writing, how you are presenting yourself as a writer and a thinker in each of the pieces. Then explore why any differences and similarities exist. What can these (dis)connections teach us about the nature of English studies? What kind of student is this department producing, as evidenced by your published work? Is this good or bad? Why?

While making these connections, avoid remaining at the level of description (i.e., "I analyzed short stories in my prose class and poems in my poetry class.") Instead, *you need to ask and offer tentative answers to HOW and WHY questions*: How did you think and write for each class? Why? What kind of work did each course value, and why (reread old syllabi for clues)? How did the ideologies and assumptions upon which each course was founded affect what, how, and why you read and wrote? These are the more complex kinds of questions you need to be asking and answering.

You're also invited to make the same kinds of (dis)connections between the texts you produced in school with those that provide evidence of your life outside of school. Again, go beyond the merely descriptive and into the theoretical and reflective. For example, if one of your outside texts represents your deep religious convictions, you can analyze how your religious ideologies challenged some of the interpretive theories you may have been exposed to in your English classes. How, for example, did you deal with the postmodern assertion that there is no one Truth? How did you integrate the competing theories and ideologies in your life? Or did you? How do you see your out-of-school ideologies affecting the choices you made as an English major (e.g., the kinds of courses you avoided, selected; the kinds of texts you read; the kinds of readings and interpretations you produced). By making these types of (dis)connections, you'll be theorizing how English majors are not created in a vacuum; instead, they are the product of the many competing discourses that shape a life.

Look to Alice Walker's *The Same River Twice* for an example of how to structure new prose around representative life/school texts. Notice that she includes a lot of texts written by people other than herself (letters from friends, articles and columns written by critics, photographs, etc.) to create a context for each chapter. You can do the same sort of thing to illustrate how the discourses you've encountered and contended with were not always (and were not often) the ones you wrote. (165-66)

Jung's assignment mimics the same self-reflective analysis of constructions of the self in previous writings that Min Zhan Lu and Wendy Hesford explored in what Hesford called "meta-texts." While Lu had asked students to reflect on their previous readings and writings about a particular class reading, Jung is asking students to critically reflect on their academic career of writing as English majors. Thus, the assignment encourages students to take their writing portfolio seriously as not only previous learning experiences but also as moments of self-construction. The emphasis of the assignment on "(dis)connections" is a longstanding feminist pedagogical value. Jung asks students to reflect on the continuity and discontinuity between their values and interests in their personal lives and those in their academic classes and writing; this type of reflection and self-analysis of "(dis)connections" between academic and personal is one that echoes Margaret Lindgren's 1998 proposed journal assignment for graduate students' consideration of gaps between academic and personal lives. Additionally, I think the concept of "(dis)connections" could potentially be traced even earlier to some of the 1970-80s writing assignments that emphasized the (often problematic) relationship between writing and material and social conditions. Jung's assignment, then, is an example of using feminist pedagogical theories that have been developed and revised, but have remained consistent throughout much feminist composition scholarship.

The final trend in the 21st century feminist writing assignments is the explicit focus on feminist praxis, connecting feminist theories to assignments. While Jung's assignment is discussed above as a revision and extension of specific feminist theories, her assignment as well as others (especially Middleton's, Schell's, etc.) referenced above could easily be counted in this final category of feminist praxis. Especially when considering Jung's assignment's cross-over into this trend, it's interesting to note that these well-theorized assignments are also the longest and most fully developed published assignments of the era. Aside from Jung's and the others that overlap this category, I'll mainly look at Krista Ratcliffe's Adrienne Rich infused two course curriculum and Laura Micciche's three developed and theorized assignments.

In "Coming Out: Or, How Adrienne Rich's Feminist Theory Complicates Intersections of Rhetoric and Composition Studies, Cultural Studies, and Writing Program Administration," Ratcliffe looks at the feminist theory and politics that Rich forwards and how it can inform rhetoric and composition theoretically and pedagogically. In her final section, she explores connections between theory and practice by looking at her development of the FYE (first year English) and second year writing courses she designed. Her argument is twofold: first, she's suggesting that Rich informs her general curriculum trajectory, which forwards a "feminist literacy" (44); second, she suggests that her Rich influenced trajectory does not name Rich in her overview of the curriculum. She explains that explicitly labeling the curriculum as feminist may be too controlling as it influences TAs, but that scholarship (her chapter) is sometimes a better way to show connections between theory and practice. In this reduced excerpt (for space), Ratcliffe articulates the FYE course and its connections to Rich:

[...] English 001 (now subtitled Academic Literacy) asks students to write in a variety of genres (e.g., poetry, narratives, freewriting, summary, critical responses) as short writing and then to write thesis-support essays as their final products. This focus allows students to explore different ways of expression themselves; it also allows students to learn how to adapt such expressions into academic prose. This emphasis helps students learn to articulate and refine their own writing processes as well as to find effective voices within the academy. With these writing goals in mind, English 001 offers the following inquiry-based units:

Unit One: Academic Exposition

Unit Two: Academic Analyses

Unit Three: Academic Critique

Unit Four: Academic Argument

Unit Five Academic Reflection and Essay Exams

The unit on academic exposition juxtaposes academic writing with personal literacy narratives and asks students to explain the import of literacy; this focus echoes Rich's process of writing about her own experiences as a way of understanding cultural issues. The unit on academic analyses asks students to research authoritative sources on topics of their choice and to insert their own voices into the conversation; this focus echoes Rich's belief that hiding one's voice behind abstract prose can be a dysfunctional silence. The unit on academic critique asks students to employ an academic theory as a springboard for questioning and evaluating a pop culture phenomenon; this focus echoes Rich's claims that theory must be tied to material culture and that material culture is ripe for feminist critique. [...] (43-44)

Ratcliffe's curricular explanation doesn't exactly describe writing assignments; however, the movement of the units and mentioning of explicit genres suggests the emphasis of each unit is the main writing assignment. Unlike the other writing assignments surveyed, Ratcliffe's emphasis is not on the particular set of feminist pedagogical values; rather, her emphasis is on the importance of being accountable pedagogically to the theories that we argue inform classes, assignments, and teaching strategies. Nonetheless, in this example, she's forwarding Rich's feminist theory by arguing for the following "feminist literacies": connections between the personal and larger cultural issues, connections between material culture and theory, and writing styles that are more inclusive. The first two—connections between the personal and

larger cultural issues and connections between material culture and theory—like using Rich’s theories—have been feminist pedagogical values that have been consistent and evolved across all eras of feminist composition writing assignments. While the last—writing styles that are more inclusive—is not a feminist value that has appeared thus far in the writing assignments, a desire for being inclusive is one that has motivated feminist politics and pedagogy. As feminism has become more aware of the diverse array of women that are a part of the movement (during the 80s and 90s), inclusive practices have been central to work for women’s liberation and consciousness raising groups.²⁰ In terms of writing style, however, there are echoes of a desire for inclusivity in Lillian Bridwell-Bowles’s earlier noted arguments for more non-academic writing opportunities for students as well as the general valuing of personal experiences and narrative in feminist writing assignments.

Similar to Ratcliffe’s interest in explicitly connecting feminist theory to classroom practice, in “Writing as Feminist Rhetorical Theory,” Laura Micciche connects feminist rhetorics to pedagogy specifically through writing assignments. Drawing on a wide array of feminist rhetorics, especially writing from feminist theorists such as Donna Haraway, Helene Cixous, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Toni Morrison, etc., Micciche locates important feminist rhetorical strategies employed in writing—strategies such as play, imagination, and the political function of writing (182). Essentially, Micciche looks to these feminist texts as places to locate specific feminist rhetorical-writing strategies that can be used to expand feminist pedagogies and writing assignments. Taking a more detailed look at Haraway’s “A Manifesto for Cyborgs,” Micciche also argues that feminist rhetorical strategies, such as play, are important because

²⁰ Inclusive consciousness raising group discussion practices were explicitly discussed by one feminist teacher and early activist for women’s liberation that was interviewed for chapter three.

they are key to writing that enacts possibility and change. Further though, I would add that feminist writing strategies that function as intentional interruptions challenge radical pedagogies to manifest more clearly in the kinds of writing assignments assigned and writing skills valued. Even though Micciche is pulling the “feminist thinking” as feminist rhetorical strategies out of feminist content, she argues that these strategies can be applied to pedagogy and writing assignments that don’t focus on feminist content (184). Thinking about how feminist writing can help us locate alternative rhetorical values and feminist thinking, Micciche goes on to offer three writing assignments—not necessarily a course trajectory—that utilize *play* as an important feminist rhetorical literacy.

The first assignment, “Parody and Discourse,” asks students to play with a most likely new genre of writing for many, parody, while they engage with and critique disciplinary discourses, and the second assignment, “Inventional Argument,” which draws on Haraway’s manifesto, is similar to a more traditional researched argument, except the goal is to dream bigger and be playful in regards to what is possible (184-6). While each of the assignments offer feminists unique and interesting ways to use feminist theory, I will share and examine her third assignment here, “Creating Interruptions”:

Goals:

- To practice asking questions that change the course of a conversation or debate.
- To assert agency as a writer and thinker in order to think in critical ways alongside as well as against source material.

Description:

Like a dialogue of sources assignment, in which students create a conversation among secondary sources to arrive at a better understanding of what’s at issue in a given debate, the interruptive paper creates a dialogue—but of a different sort. Its purpose is to put sources in conversation in order to interrupt them, moving tangential ideas to the center, if warranted, in order to put pressure on the center of debate or discussion. What happens, for instance, when the center of debates about sexism in advertising

turns from women's bodies to women's emotions? How might this move alter the conversation, lead somewhere other than to the conclusion that "sex sells," introduce new insights about the consequences of sexist advertising on women's subjectivities? How does our thinking change or create openings that take us in unexpected and potentially fruitful directions? Does putting emotion at the center orientate us differently to advertising, to sexism?

Whereas a dialogue of sources paper typically asks students to insert their own voices alongside those of their sources, gauging where they "fit" into the conversation, the interruptive paper desires no such fit. The goal is not integration into already established lines of thought but assertions of agency that court disintegration if and when necessary. In addition, the interruptive paper looks for normative claims and common sense associations in order to investigate what counts as normal within a particular context. Students are invited to reject the pretense of polite, consensual dialogue so as to allow contradictions and questions to surface, potentially changing the surface as well as the deep structure of debate. (Micciche 184-7)

This assignment, "Creating Interruptions," challenges students to claim rhetorical agency through asking questions that interrupt. Often the typical source synthesis essay that writing classes forward asks students to put sources in conversation with each other and then add their voice to the conversation—in polite and respectable academic discourse. Micciche's assignment, however, encourages students to disrupt normal academic discourse with questions that have the potential and power to stop the discussion and force it to change directions—an aspect of academic work that is equally as important as the conversation. While Micciche does less theorizing of this final assignment, many feminists have advocated for the theme of interruptions, especially interrupting normalized hegemonic discourses; specifically, Nedra Reynolds has advocated for interruptions as a tactical rhetoric that offers marginalized voices agency (*Feminism & Composition Studies: In Other Words*).

Micciche summarizes her goal with these three assignments—on parody, invention, and interruption—as offering students "writing modes as well as politicized acts that aim for movement of some kind," a movement she equates with feminism (187). Micciche's

understanding of giving students writing modes that are in and of themselves more political is in some ways a challenge to more traditional writing assignments. While many feminist teachers throughout this survey have taught feminist texts and theories that advocate for real transformations in material, economic, social, cultural, and transnational lives and systems, Micciche is essentially asking if this political motivation is as present in the type of writing we ask students to do—the writing mode itself. Thus, like Middleton, Schell, and Jung, Micciche's assignments cross between these last two trends of using new or revised feminist theories and then, explicit connections between feminist theory and assignments.

Despite the continued dispersal and expansion of feminist rhetoric and composition research interests from the 1990s into the 2000s, clearly writing assignments were not only present in this recent era of scholarship, but also critically and purposefully attended to. The norm in recent feminist scholarship, like the other eras surveyed, is still a short and quick reference to a writing assignment, even though there are two scholars who have shared fully developed ones (Jung; Micciche). Beyond the length and detail of the assignments though, in the 21st century, I would argue there is more attention across these assignments to refining feminist theories and connecting those refined theories to specific classroom practices like writing assignments: Joyce Middleton, Eileen Schell, and Julie Jung each described assignments that extended and revised feminist theories on race, rhetorical transnational frameworks, and revision. Krista Ratcliffe and Laura Micciche made arguments for specifically connecting feminist theory to larger curriculums and course scaffolding (Ratcliffe) and writing assignment prompts and writing modes (Micciche). While the traditional essay assignments of Pough and Helmers were less about refining feminist theory, there is an attention to self-reflective

feminist teaching with an emphasis on connecting theory to practice. This emphasis on evaluating whether or not classroom practices are informed by theories—up-to-date and revised theories—is a sign of the success and diversity of recent feminist rhetorical research.

Conclusion

As I have been discussing my larger dissertation research project at conferences and collecting feminist writing assignments from participants, one of the main questions I've gotten in response is an often anxious: *How are you defining "feminist" writing assignments? What makes a writing assignment feminist?!* Indeed, I believe defining feminism has historically always been a conflicted act—whether in rhetoric and composition feminist scholarship or the different eras of the feminist movement. However, I believe this literature review of writing assignments shows that more than just a vague sense of multiple feminisms, the concept of feminism has historically evolved through what Lynn Worsham explains (in the epigraph) as each generation's reworking of central feminist texts, terms, theories, and pedagogical practices (351). While each of the surveyed eras of writing assignments has been constructed, in part, through larger connections to rhetoric and composition, feminist politics and theory, the historical economic and social concerns, and even the specificity of each writer's institutional context, there have also been important trends in feminist pedagogical theories and values that have spanned the eras and connected these assignments.

Some of these connecting trends include feminist investments in identity and language, personal experiences, journaling, and self-reflexive praxis. Feminists have consistently been invested in understanding how identity works—how identity is constructed by language, how

identity is negotiated in the classroom, and how we can deconstruct limiting articulations of identity. Reworked in the 1990s to shift from a cultural feminist interest in gender differences to a more robust understanding of differences through intersectionality, identity still remains a mainstay in feminist pedagogical theory and practice (see Chapters 2 and 3 for more). Additionally, feminist composition and rhetoric scholars have also been interested in connections between and across personal experiences, the academic experience, and larger cultural and social issues; while approaches to asking students to write about personal experiences have been reworked and revised—from the expressivist interest in voice to a more historically and socially constructed critical understanding of experiences—the personal experiences of students is a continuous thread in feminist scholarship in writing assignments and classroom discussions. Indeed, the feminist valuing of the personal may, in part, explain the longstanding use of journaling as a writing assignment. While journaling was less present in the 21st century, the contemporary collection (Chapter 3) suggests that feminist teachers still find journal assignments relevant and valuable for students. And, as the writing assignments of the 21st century most clearly exemplify, feminist scholars have also maintained an active investment in critical, self-reflexive evaluations of pedagogy, feminist theories, and praxis.

As feminist sites of research and investment continue to expand and diversify and feminist theories continue to be revised, reworked, and extended—as is the case in this most recent era of feminist scholarship—feminist praxis and attention to self-reflexivity in teaching are necessary. Writing assignments, along with feminist theory and sites of study, are one of the textual vehicles through which feminist teachers bring new research sites, interests, political investments, and revised and extended theories into the classroom. Thus, studying

writing assignments—as this literature review has begun to do—as textual classroom artifacts is one method for evaluating and assessing feminist praxis, or how new feminist theories, texts, and practices are promoting student engagement, critical thinking, and writing.

2

Defining Feminist Pedagogy & Assignments: Five Teachers' Perspectives

Through histories of composition that have traced historical approaches to the teaching of writing as they relate to varying rhetorics, epistemologies, and ideologies, we have gained a broader sense of the theoretical workings of pedagogy. In *Rhetoric and Reality*, James Berlin brought attention to the epistemologies or rhetorics of particular pedagogies—arguing that epistemologies and ideologies are directly related to pedagogy. While his taxonomy traces epistemologies, rather than ideologies, he explains that epistemologies, ideologies, and rhetorics are always related to pedagogy (6). Only a year after *Rhetoric and Reality*, in “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Classroom,” Berlin returns to his categories, this time to consider the relationship between ideology and rhetoric²¹. Drawing on Marxist sociologist Goran Therborn, Berlin further explains, “Conceived from the perspective of rhetoric, ideology provides the language to define the subject (the self), other subjects, the material world, and the relation of all of these to each other. Ideology is thus inscribed in language practices, entering all features of our experience” (719). Berlin’s analysis of pedagogical rhetorics has

²¹ While Berlin moves from an epistemological taxonomy to exploring the ideologies of pedagogies, this seems to simply stem from a more careful attention to the academic lineage of these two terms. Berlin is less explicit about why he shifts from epistemology to ideology; however, using Goran Therborn to explain ideology, there is some clear overlap between epistemology and ideology. Berlin explains that Therborn saw ideology as addressing three questions: “What exists? What is good? What is possible?” (719). Berlin explains these questions: the first question suggests that ideology always relates to epistemology—that ideology interpellates the subject and their understanding of what is real. The second question explains that ideology is the source of understanding of standards and evaluations. The third question “defines the limits of expectation” for society (720). While I’m primarily drawing on Berlin to understand how composition has used ideology, for the dissertation, I will return to Therborn and his ideology questions.

challenged rhetoric and composition scholars to understand the ideological implications of pedagogies and teaching practices.

In *Rhetoric at the Margins*, David Gold critiques how Berlin's pedagogical taxonomy has sometimes been taken up, arguing that pedagogies and pedagogical ideologies are not monolithic; rather, individual teachers (and institutional curricula) tend to vary in their pedagogies, sometimes successfully enacting liberatory pedagogy and sometimes enacting what Berlin originally labeled as current-traditional pedagogical styles. Gold's examination of three "microhistories" highlights not only the ideological variance in pedagogies, but also, the value of said variance. When he explains Melvin Tolson's pedagogy, for instance, the pedagogical variance—even when it is current-traditional—is explained as responsive to specific classroom contexts, individual students' needs, and writing objectives. Thus, Gold shows not only how pedagogical variance occurs, but also how it can be understood as a strength. Understanding pedagogical variances as a strength, as Gold does, prompts further research into the classroom spaces and activities in which pedagogical ideologies are visible.

This argument about the heterogeneity and inconsistency of pedagogy is applicable for all specific pedagogical orientations. As feminist theory has noted and the literature review of Chapter 1 suggests, feminism is a plural concept that maintains historical trends, but that nonetheless can be constructed differently for different people; these constructions and multiple feminisms are based on historical context, varying feminist academic genealogies, personal experiences, and local contexts, among other cultural and academic influences. Susan Jarratt has explained it in terms of disciplinarity:

Like composition studies, feminism is not a monolithic enterprise with a unified research agenda. Rather, feminisms are transdisciplinary projects, challenging all boundary-

marking logics and literacies, calling into question not only gendered exclusions in the production and dissemination of knowledge but also the buttressing of racial, class, and other privileges thereby. ("Introduction," 2)

Indeed, in another essay on feminist pedagogy, Jarratt has said that "the area of feminist pedagogy [...] is better represented as a set of questions than a list of practices" ("Feminist Pedagogy," 124-5). Whether feminisms or feminist pedagogy, feminist orientations must be considered as plurals—practices and epistemologies that encase different theories, values, practices, and definitions.

Many of these arguments for multiplicity, heterogeneity, and differences within feminism and feminist pedagogy are not new or revolutionary. Much of Jarratt's work on feminism, for instance, comes in response to post-structuralism in the late 1990s. While the theory that feminism and feminist pedagogy are not monolithic orientations may now seem evident, I would argue that less work has been done to understand the implications. David Gold's arguments (2008) have begun to consider the implications for this theoretical understanding of pedagogy as it relates to histories of composition. But, what are the implications of multiple feminisms or divergences and differences within feminist pedagogy when we look at writing assignments? How do real teachers hold a rich and dynamic history and pedagogy, like feminism, and use it to inform specific classroom practices and texts?

Before looking at the larger collection of feminist writing assignments as a whole corpus (Chapter 3), in this chapter, I will consider these questions through interview responses from five participating teachers who contributed writing assignments. Starting with the teachers' explanations of pedagogy and their assignments grounds my own analysis in the next chapter by allowing them to self-identify and define their own understandings of feminism, feminist

pedagogy, and their sense of the philosophy behind their assignments. Although I only interviewed a sample of the participating teachers, how they situate and understand feminism and feminist pedagogy is relevant for understanding and studying their writing assignments as potential enactments of pedagogy.

Specifically, looking at the teachers' understandings of their connections to and definitions of feminist pedagogy alongside of their descriptions of their writing assignments and classroom practices, I have found that while there are some shared feminist pedagogical values, there is also a flexibility to feminism that allows each of the teachers to uniquely use feminism for their own interests and needs. Many of the teachers understand feminism as a larger epistemology that informs their worldview and sense of self. Similarly, in the classroom, the teachers emphasize an epistemological questioning in their assignments as a way of fostering an understanding of how knowledge and identity are socially constructed; they also emphasize feminist understandings of the self as a whole (spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical) being and critical understandings of personal experiences. While these strands of feminism are shared, through the reflections the teachers illustrate how feminism is a set of pedagogical and epistemological perspectives that are flexible and both implicit and explicit in their thinking and practice.

Interview Methods

For the five interviews, I used Skype²² to conduct semi-structured, qualitative interviews. While I used an IRB-approved list of questions²³ as a starting place, for each

²² One of the five interviews was conducted in person; the other four were conducted over Skype.

interview I also included a few participant-specific questions that were based on each participant's contributed writing assignments. The semi-structured interviews, which ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and a half, were what Shulamit Reinharz has explained as "interviewee-guided" because I encouraged participant teachers to organically direct the movement of the conversation in which I primarily sought to understand their perspectives, pedagogical desires, and memories of their assignments and courses (24). Thus, despite primarily using the same questions, the interviews are organized very differently based on how each participant teacher decided to respond to particular questions and what they decided to emphasize. After each interview, I used ExpressScribe software to transcribe each of the recordings. I listened to each recording at least twice to ensure accurate transcriptions.

For this chapter, I have used the interviews as a means of understanding how different teachers understand and enact feminist pedagogy in the writing classroom. To understand this, I have used both explicit questions and questions that are intended to get the participants to describe their own materials, classrooms, experiences, and thinking. In other words, I explicitly ask the teachers to articulate how they understand feminist pedagogy, and I also ask them to describe their writing assignments, teaching processes, and other concrete classroom practices in their own words without emphasizing feminist pedagogy. Throughout the chapter, I start with the participating teachers' explicit explanations, and then I shift to using their more descriptive responses to a variety of questions in order to consider the specific feminist practices, values, and theories they each use. While I have not used grounded theory to code the interviews (as is used to analyze the larger corpus of writing assignments in Chapter 3), the

²³ See Appendix D for the original list of IRB-approved questions.

analysis is motivated by the underlying premise of grounded theory: the analysis has emerged from the data. I have studied the interview transcripts for moments that distill each participant's understanding of their relationship to feminism, their pedagogies, and the assignments and courses they contributed.

In terms of the writing, I have tried (when possible) to include some responses from each participating teacher for each question and section. Additionally, the participants have been given pseudonyms (only one chose to self-select a pseudonym), and I have removed any identifying names or institutions from the responses. Additionally, I have used "[...]" to indicate places in responses where I have made cuts or edits. The interview excerpts are transcribed with all of the nuances, run-ons, extra words or thoughts, etc. from unprepared speech. Some cuts, however, are used for brevity and to remove some of the excessive conversational language that is unnecessary or repetitive. Nonetheless, indicating places where I have made cuts, even very small cuts, is important because it suggests moments where more was said, the participant was thinking through the response through talking, and it exposes my authorial edits.

Definitions of Feminist Teachers

Of the 26 participating teachers, I conducted interviews with five of them. The five were selected based primarily on differences among the writing assignments and/or course syllabi they decided to contribute to this study, in addition to their original willingness to be interviewed (a question on the consent form) and their schedules during the summer and fall of 2014. To select five, I asked participants who seemed to offer different perspectives on feminism through their writing assignments. In order to participate in this research study,

volunteers were asked to self-identify as being a feminist teacher, using feminist pedagogy, or as having been influenced in some significant way by feminist scholarship; thus, there is a wide range of commitment to feminism and feminist pedagogy represented.

The five participating teachers—Cornelia, Deborah, Leah, Elizabeth, and Gloria—are each at different institutional and life stages. Cornelia is a professor jointly hired between a Women and Gender Studies and Writing Department at a private research university in the northeast and is close to retirement. Deborah is a tenured Associate Professor and teaches at a southern, faith-based university. Leah is a newly appointed (2014) Assistant Professor of rhetoric and composition in a large research university in the mid-Atlantic region. Elizabeth is a tenured Professor of rhetoric and composition, approaching 50 years old (as self-identified below), and teaches at a small, research state school in the mid-west. Gloria is an ABD graduate student who is teaching at a mid-size, private university in New England.

Precisely because of the ranges of commitment to feminism that the study allowed, the first two questions asked teachers to self-define their own relationship to feminist pedagogy. Specifically, I asked them if they considered themselves to be feminist teachers and what that meant to them. Here are their responses to the first part of that question:

Deborah: Yes, I do. [...] I would say I started thinking of myself as a feminist teacher probably before I went to graduate school—so back in the 80s at some point. And that story in my talk from Fem Rhet about meeting this feminist librarian and the nail polish and all that... [the radical feminist librarian questioned her for wearing nail polish] so that was sort of as I began to think of myself as a feminist. I began exploring feminist pedagogy, I was teaching then. And then when I came to X State, [...] the very first paper I wrote was about collaboration and feminist pedagogy. So I've been working within that vein for a long time.

[...] there was some part of me that was always a feminist. I'm not sure why and I have no idea where it came from—because there was nothing in my family life or in my friendships or anything that would have made me aware of that. But I remember way back from my teen years, you know, saying—"if I had to submit to my husband, I wouldn't be a Christian." I

remember those moments of just sort of awareness—that were completely my own. I didn't start reading feminist or even women's literature until really graduate school. [...]

Cornelia: [...] Well, for purposes of easy academic categorization, I would call myself a feminist teacher—because that, in these circles, has a kind of recognition factor, right? But, what I actually think of myself as—or conceive of myself as—and live as—is [...] someone who is part of Women's Liberation [...]. And has that as one of my central principles of moving toward liberation for all people.

And, within that life task—which is not just confined to the university, I certainly do think of myself as a teacher, someone who teaches. But in fairly [...] discrete circumstances. So that when I'm out on a demonstration, there may be a moment here and there where I would be teaching in a conversation with someone. But, that would not be the primary way I thought of myself in that situation. So, I think of myself as a teacher as a job—this is my job, this is how I earn my living, as a teacher. But, out in the world, in the larger sense of what I'm doing, no. I don't see myself as primarily a teacher. I don't think it's my role to teach other people. So, it's a very restricted or discrete identity. [...] it's a discrete identity that overlaps pretty closely with my paid labor.

Leah: I do. But, I think of that as just one among many other features of my teaching. My first time teaching a college level course and teaching a college level writing course was within a Women's Studies Department, which is what my first MA is in. So, I think of myself as a feminist teacher like through and through. But, it's not what's always at the forefront of my mind, honestly. [...] I would say it's deeply internalized.

So, I also [...] first encountered composition through writing center tutoring when I was an undergraduate student some time ago. So, I would say that writing center pedagogy and the values that are part of writing center pedagogy are just as much a part of my teaching—and those often overlap with feminist values, to the point where it's actually hard for me to say what's what. [...] I would [also] say Rhetorical Genre Theory—at least as I have come to it through my research—really informs how I teach and think about my teaching. And I'm also someone who's been very influenced by the different institutions and local cultures in the places where I taught. [...] I mean I guess that's a part of who I am as a teacher—trying to be really responsive to where I'm at geographically and culturally.

Elizabeth: You know, I don't know if I would so much anymore. Although I think I am, when I think about it. So, I'm getting ready to be 50 years olds—so, there's a whole baggage of stuff. I have been a feminist my whole life. I was raised by a woman who was a feminist, I grew up in a feminist household. But the older I've gotten, the less it feels like an adjective that I need to put in front of anything—because it's just sort of who I am? Do you know what I mean?

So I think when I was first becoming a teacher, it seemed important to me to always foreground the feminist part of my teaching identity and the feminist part of my classroom. And I don't

think it's not there anymore or it's there any less than it was before. But, somehow it doesn't seem necessary because it seems so established in me.

So if somebody asked me if I was a feminist teacher, I would probably say... umm.. yeah, I guess I am! But, I don't know, I don't put it that way I guess.

Gloria: Yeah, I definitely would. Particularly, I've read a lot of... well not a lot, but I guess bell hooks' definitive work on engaged pedagogy, [...] *Teaching to Transgress*. [...] I really appreciate her approach to engaged pedagogy and bringing your full self to the classroom. The professor's role, the instructor's role, in self-actualization and how that impacts the classroom—understanding that it is a collaborative process. And, things are not always, you know, neat; but often times messy—and it's in that mess that we often actually make meaning and learn from that.

Amongst these five participating teachers, who are all within rhetoric and composition, there are a variety of ways that they have come to feminism, to be (or not) a feminist teacher, and to think about themselves in relation to feminist teaching. Despite some hesitations and clarifications, across these responses there is a clear sense that each individual teacher has used feminism in ways that are rhetorical, flexible, and grounded in specific histories and material circumstances. Two of these teachers, Deborah and Gloria, gave a definitive yes, while Cornelia, Elizabeth, and Leah each offered more hesitant and qualified agreement with the identity of being a feminist teacher. Deborah's response, one that resonates with my own coming to feminism, suggests that some find feminism despite experiential contexts like a religious upbringing; life experiences (like being a part of the church) don't always match internal, felt self-knowledge, whereas feminism eventually did. Like Deborah, Gloria describes being connected to feminism through specific texts; for Gloria, it was bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress*, Deborah is less specific, though she references graduate school readings.

The other three participants, Cornelia, Leah, and Elizabeth, each agree to being feminist teachers, though with hesitancy and a variety of clarifications. Cornelia clarifies that teaching is

not her life's work, but rather a discrete job she does that is a smaller part of her larger commitment to the Women's Liberation movement; thus, Cornelia's hesitancy is in part about defining herself primarily as a teacher (rather than an activist), though also about using the word feminism rather than Women's Liberation—a second wave understanding of feminism that is grounded in activism around women's rights and identity-based equality. Leah and Elizabeth both seem firmly committed to feminism, but they are also hesitant regarding the specifics of identifying as a feminist teacher. Leah's hesitancy comes from decidedly claiming one pedagogical home; rather, she insists on acknowledging the complex interdisciplinary areas of research that have informed her teaching as well as the geographical contexts of her teaching. As Elizabeth grew up with a feminist mother, she understands feminism as informing her larger sense of the world, rather than just her teaching; later in the interview, she agreed that she understands feminism as being an epistemological perspective. Across these perspectives, the participants understand feminism as an epistemological perspective, an activist agenda that became part of the labor of being a teacher for a living, one pedagogical school of several influencing teaching, and as resonating with prior senses of self—among other things!

Through this question, I was essentially asking the participants to grapple with their own understandings of self-identifications, labels, and definitions they associate with their role as teachers. Implicit within these responses there are two tensions: first, definitions of feminism are conflicting and yet, significant; and second, there is a tension around whether or not feminism is conscious and explicit or more implicit and tacit. In Deborah's quick reference to her librarian friend who questioned why she would wear nail polish as well as in Cornelia's

preference for the term “Women’s Liberation” instead of feminism, there is the suggestion that how feminism is defined, named, labeled, etc. is significant. The nail polish critique is a reference to internal policing by feminists of what counts or doesn’t count as feminist, whereas Cornelia’s label preferences suggests a felt risk involved with being labeled and thus associated with a not accurate version of feminism. Indeed, this tension around what counts as feminism is an undercurrent that I have felt when engaging with all of the participants, whether for interviews or collecting assignments. This definitional anxiety stems from the theoretical insecurity of trying to grapple with simultaneously knowing that multiple feminisms exist and that some things (values, actions, discourses, images, etc.) are simply not feminist.

The second tension—that feminism can be explicit and implicit—is articulated by Elizabeth and Leah, but it also is suggested simply by the array of responses that five teachers offered in answering this simple, identification-based question. Through the question, Elizabeth and Leah come to the conclusion that they do identify as feminist teachers; however, both of them articulate a sense of their feminism being, as Leah says, “deeply internalized.” If asked randomly “what kind of teacher are you?,” it seems unlikely either one of them would have said “feminist!” However, within the context of being interviewed by someone studying feminist writing assignments (for a study they both willingly contributed assignments to), they do talk and think through the complexity of this identification as informing their teaching on some level—but that level is more implicit, more epistemological or internal. This tension between whether feminist thinking is implicit or explicit suggests a flexibility and rhetorical aspect to feminism. Clearly, feminism has been an important and necessary perspective for these women at some point in their lives (through family upbringing, sense of self, graduate school readings

and writings, liberating all people through activism, etc.); and, through that important connection to feminism, all of them feel some sense of shared feminist values, thinking, and work. However, there is also a flexibility within feminism that allows them to connect with feminism, or to use feminism, when it is useful, necessary, and relevant. While it may inform their larger sense of self, it is less essential as an identification label or descriptor for their teaching.

In addition to these different ways into feminism, the teachers also explicitly explained their own understandings of what feminist pedagogy means to them as a teaching philosophy and practice. While their identifications and history with feminism are each unique and grounded in precise personal, historical, and material situations, their explicit descriptions of feminist pedagogy contain two shared strands: an emphasis on identity differences and on feminism as informing and helping to construct a sense of self.

The first shared strand of feminist pedagogy that all of the participants identified was an attention to identity differences. There were a few different articulations of an investment in identity: some specifically articulated an investment in intersectional understandings of identity, and some called it an attention to identity and power hierarchies. Across the interviews, though, this attention to power and different identities was often one of the first, initial responses to the question—what does being a feminist teacher mean to you? More specifically, here's what some of the participating teachers said:

Deborah: [...] I don't have a worked out answer to this... I do think of myself as anti-hierarchical, I'm kind of radically anti-elitist, and someone who is respectful of difference and is always mindful of the people on the margins and the people who have less power—and trying to find ways to make their voices heard and help them to take more control over their lives. And I think that's lots of women, but it's also a social class issue for me, students of color. So I think that the notion of difference is something I'm really attentive to. I don't believe I can empower

students, but I want students to become aware that they can seize more power in their lives... and that they may feel that they have less power for reasons that don't have anything to do with them. I think that those ideas of collaboration, of the centrality of difference, of trying to flatten hierarchies—make students aware of them, give them tools for resisting them—those are all things I think I try to do as a feminist teacher.

I think I was very influenced by Adrienne Rich and by bell hooks. And, I think because bell hooks always called me to task for my unconscious racism—I mean, growing up in very white communities. She just calls me to be mindful of what I'm doing to make things better for people who are not like me.

Leah: So all of my teaching is interested in cultural norms, genre conventions, and helping students to develop the kinds of rhetorical abilities to notice those and navigate them and to do so in a way that serves them according to them, not according to me. [...]

I [also] would say paying attention to categories. So those could be categories of identity, but they could be other kinds of categories. And coming at them with the assumption that they can both be useful and at the same time get in the way—and that there is something empowering about seeing how they work on you and make decisions about what you want to do with them. [...] seeing that critical engagement with categories as a crucial part of being rhetorically empowered. Though it has just as much to do with Queer Studies for me as it does feminism.

In terms of intersectionality—because of when I came up in women's studies, Black feminist thought plays a huge role in terms of how I think about things. But I don't know that it... again, that's something that's really more deep down than foregrounded in the assignments.

Elizabeth: [...] You know... the more I read about teaching, the more I change as a person, but I think that at the center of my pedagogy is always students. And maybe that was because that was the way that I was always taught. That's just what feels comfortable to me—to have very active classrooms with students doing the work and not me doing a lot of talking.

[...] for teaching I think I did model myself on a lot of my teachers. [...] And, so I remember my writing classes very well and they were, even though it was [...] in the early mid-1980s, my teachers were doing things with portfolios, and doing a lot of response, and it was really very at the moment where we were in composition theory. You know, focusing on process and on response and audience and stuff. And so I think that those teachers really helped me become the teacher that I ended up becoming. And then, when I was in graduate school, I worked with Pat Sullivan and I also worked with Jim Berlin. He was very instrumental in shaping my pedagogy as well because he was very into cultural studies—and then, to interrogating the classroom as a space for shaping identities. And so, [...] he really helped me [...] to craft out critical and cultural pedagogies. Identities really helped me to think about the classroom as a space where we were doing more than just learning how to write. But, we were learning how to be people. The people that we wanted to be—not just the students, but me, too, I think. Maybe that's the evolving thing.

Gloria: You know, I didn't think about this when you asked the question. [...] I think also, there are different feminisms, but one of the things that I make sure to include in all of my classes is that intersectional approach as well. So even when we're talking about three types of femininity, we're also talking about masculinity, ability, we talk about sexuality, we talked about all of these different things and how they come together and impact a person's experience or you know, their treatment, whatever the actual topic is. [...] I think that we can take certain things for granted and certain belief systems and things that we just do as par for the course. But, if you contrast it with other teaching styles and frameworks, you see that this is not the norm. Not everyone... does that.

Cornelia: I think that notions of the sort of commonplace, but I believe it is true, of there being mutual teaching and learning that goes on between the people who are the students and the person who's the teacher. The notion that there is a reciprocal process that each brings knowledge to the exchange and that a mark of teaching as part of liberation is to have a space where that exchange can happen. I think that wrestling with issues of authority, which has certainly been part of women's liberation from the beginning. What does it mean to assert authority as a woman in the teeth of patriarchy? What does it mean to assert it and not have it be power over, but power with others? What does it mean to be able to claim your own authority—some things that you know? And, at the same time, accept the authority of others without penalizing them for asserting their authority.

Embedded in each of these responses, there are a variety of values and practices that are considered feminist; there is also, however, a consistent attention to the relationship between oppression, power dynamics, hierarchies, authority, and a range of identities that intersect.

Deborah describes this as an attention to people at the margins with less power; Leah is concerned with questioning all cultural norms, but does mention identity issues and intersectionality as a part of that; Elizabeth explains that her pedagogical training in graduate school helped her to understand the classroom as a space for interrogating cultural norms and shaping identities; Gloria talks about intersectionality, especially in terms of genders and sexualities, as a framework she's always attending to; and, Cornelia's focus on negotiating authority hints at the unequal power dynamics that exist between people and through particular histories and systems.

In these distilled articulations of feminist pedagogy, there is also an attention to the different academic and institutional spaces which fostered these feminist perspectives: Deborah names bell hooks and Adrienne Rich; Leah names queer studies, women and gender studies, black feminist thought and her backgrounds in peer counseling and writing center work; Elizabeth names cultural studies, her high school teachers who were using process-oriented writing assignments, and the influence of Patricia Sullivan and James Berlin as teachers. These articulations of feminist pedagogy begin to give a sense of how feminist pedagogy is culled together from a lifetime of pedagogical resources that have unique genealogies and touchstones: other teachers, specific writers and theorists, academic research and disciplines, and academic and other work-based experiences. While these moments of naming various genealogies occurred throughout all of the interviews at a variety of times, they suggest that feminist genealogies are central to each teacher's understanding of feminism and feminist teaching. In other words, each teacher's definitions of feminism are directly related to their personal history with feminist texts, teachers, activism, and spaces.

While Cornelia also shared her thinking about what it means to be a feminist teacher, her response is more hesitant regarding the concept of feminist pedagogy. Her story, which stems from her larger life-long commitment to the Women's Liberation movement, is also different as it is less tied to academic genealogies. She shares part of her thinking about being and becoming a feminist teacher:

So as part of my job, I have students. And, I see them as people who are temporarily in relation to me around a specific topic or subject, but they're going to be going out into the world—that I want to see eventually to be a liberated space for everyone. How can I be in a relationship with them in the classroom that models that future that I want to have happen? And, how do we together tackle whatever the topic is, that we're working on, that has in that work some seeds of thought and action that could possibly carry over—you know, beyond the classroom. So, I'd

have to say that, it's my paid work, but I'm always thinking about could this work that we're doing together extend. [...] I just see that [teaching] as a small, a very small moment in the larger [...] work for liberation [...].

I'm hesitant about the term only because there's a whole current of scholarship about feminist pedagogy that I'm sure you know very well and that I know hardly at all. So [...] almost all of what my practice is, now, has been a result of living, trying to live a life of liberation as a woman and as a lesbian. And in the process of doing that, which meant that I had to earn my living and I taught in Women's Studies classrooms. On the ground, I had to build a way of teaching that responded to those circumstances. So it didn't come out of theorizing about it. It came because I was having to do it.

In this statement, Cornelia explains her understanding of the importance of her work as a writing teacher: she understands her larger life task as participating in Women's Liberation and teaching within the university is just one small labor-based task that contributes to this larger activist agenda in small, discrete moments. Cornelia reminds us, however, that economic survival is the primary reason for university teaching. In feminist composition and in feminist scholarship across the disciplines, women's work has continually been a site of study from the 1970s to today²⁴. In Eileen Schell's early, seminal work on contingent labor, *Gypsy Academics*, she historicizes some of the nineteenth century ideologies that inform early understandings of women teaching; she claims "the rise of industrial capitalism and the emerging ideology of domesticity—assisted the rise of teaching as woman's "true profession" and also contributed to women's eventual involvement in postsecondary writing instruction" (21). Cornelia's emphasis on teaching as paid labor resists these early gendered ideologies that place women's "natural" work within the home or the classroom. Rather, she insists on offering a more complex and dynamic narrative that places her activist agenda as her main work and teaching as paid labor.

Within this framing of her teaching, Cornelia positions the writing classroom within a much

²⁴ For contemporary work, see Michelle Ballif et al.'s 2008 collection *Women's Ways of Making It in Rhetoric and Composition*, and Bivens et al.'s response "Sisyphus Rolls On: Reframing Women's Ways of "Making It" in Rhetoric and Composition." *Harlot* 10 (2013).

larger trajectory of time—one that establishes her time with students as potentially contributing to their individual growth and senses of self, which inevitably places them within the context of a world that we must all inhabit. This larger understanding of the writing classroom is placed within her life's commitment to the work of Women's Liberation.

The second shared strand in the teachers' responses to defining being a feminist teacher emphasized understanding feminism, feminist pedagogy or being a feminist teacher as central to navigating their own identities: Elizabeth explains it as an epistemology that she understands as carrying a larger pedagogical approach to the world; Gloria explains her feminist-based understanding of herself as a full, well-rounded, person in the classroom; and Cornelia explains how her identity as a lesbian required survival strategies in the classroom, which is how her pedagogy came about. In their own words:

Elizabeth: I do think of feminism as an epistemological worldview. So, it's not just a theoretical lens that you can put on and then take off. And so, you're a feminist in the classroom, you're a feminist in the parking lot, you're a feminist in the grocery store, you're a feminist at home. Because it is epistemological, it is the way that you see the world. And I think that at the heart of feminism, for me at least, is an awareness of and a working towards being aware of and a working towards trying however you can to dismantle oppression, particularly involving gender, but I think that it permeates outside of gender to race, class, and sexual orientation. Oppression by powerful groups of non-dominant groups.

Gloria: I'm really silly in my classes, actually, sometimes. But, I feel that's a part of my feminist pedagogy. Bringing my self to the class—bringing my personality to the class. And, I'm not going to change that. But I feel like in the classroom, not that we're a family—I'm the teacher and they're the students. But, I'm human. I'm myself. I laugh at things, I get upset at things, whatever. This is the package that I'm in, and it's just that. And the same with them. So, I think that just part of how I am in the classroom is a part of my feminist pedagogy.

Cornelia: And so, in an academic sense, I really don't know what feminist pedagogy means or is. I know what it has felt like to make it happen. [...] when I first started teaching in Women Studies at [University X], my principle, my stance in those classrooms was to get up and by the third day, to come out as a lesbian. And, they all assumed I was a feminist because it was the early 80s and it was women's studies. So, I would get up and I would stand up and by the third day I would come out as a lesbian because that gave people time to drop if they couldn't stand

it. Which is what people did do, you know. So, I know there's a whole literature now around disclosure in the classroom, but I hadn't read that literature. I just had figured out from teaching that if I didn't come out and say I was a lesbian right away, I felt like I would have in my classroom people who were so hostile that I couldn't go forward in the classroom at that point in time. I would have a different technique now, probably.

So the teaching came out of the struggle, applied to the classroom, but not as an abstract—like, how can I apply this concept to the classroom. It was: I'm gonna have to figure out a way to survive in this classroom with people who, for instance, when I talk about losing custody of my children, the young woman next to me, turns to me and says: "I think you should've lost custody of your children. Children shouldn't be brought up in that kind of home."

Across each of these responses is a deep sense of feminism or feminist pedagogy influencing each teacher's sense of self and their ability to negotiate their own identity. Elizabeth's response emphasizes feminism as an epistemology that she uses to navigate and respond to all of her interactions, whether with students or neighbors. Understanding feminism as an epistemology, in her response, also translates to a larger understanding of pedagogy; in her reference to talking about feminism with her neighbors without referencing the word, she is understanding her role as a teacher as exceeding the limits of the classroom. While Elizabeth was the only one to reference feminism explicitly as an epistemology, there are traces of it throughout all of the responses. Earlier (above), for instance, Leah noted that intersectionality and black feminist thought are "something that's really more deep down," a statement that hints at a more personal and epistemological understanding of feminism. Gloria, who is continuing to reference her previous connection to bell hooks' engaged pedagogy, connects feminist pedagogy to her ability to be herself in the classroom. She talked of being silly and actually offered a rather long and embarrassing story of her being herself in the classroom—a teaching commitment that models a feminist approach to knowledge, writing, and life; in this way, Gloria's insistence on being her full self works to destabilize mind/body and

academic/personal dichotomies that are prevalent in many classrooms. In both Gloria and Cornelia's responses, there is an understanding of being a feminist teacher or committed to feminist work that allows space for the whole person and even demands that commitment to wholeness. Cornelia's response is less about what feminist pedagogy means to her and more about the early struggles for survival as a woman and lesbian. Even though the Women's Liberation movement and women and gender studies departments were spaces (the only spaces) in which she could be and survive—and her classroom practices did create space for her—there is also a sense that creating space and surviving were just barely enough.

Across these five participant-teachers' explanations of their teaching identities and definitions of feminist pedagogy, there are both shared feminist values and situated differences. Several of the teachers understand feminism as central to negotiating and understanding their own identity and larger understanding of the world, and feminism is their lens or framework for critically interrogating power differences, intersectionality, and other hierarchical normative categories. Additionally, each teacher's specific and unique feminist genealogy was central to their understanding of feminism and feminist teaching; each teacher had their own feminist touchstones and history that informed their definitions and practices. Indeed, the shared values and varying emphases suggest that feminism is flexible and rhetorical: each of these women entered feminism at different historical and personal moments in their lives, emphasized shared strands of feminist thought, and understand feminism as informing different classroom practices.

The tensions explored through these responses, however, point to the potential underutilized value of pedagogical reflections. While several of these teachers identified feminism as

epistemological and central to their understanding of self, there was also quite a lot of hesitancy, qualifying, and thinking through their relationships with feminism as a part of their teaching. Hesitancy and qualifications are, of course, natural responses to identifying labels and definitions; additionally, the tensions around definitions of feminism make such responses even more expected. However, many of the responses also suggested that the interview space itself offered these teachers the opportunity to reflect on feminism and their teaching in ways that were new and brought about previously unconsidered knowledge of their identities as teachers. Elizabeth's earlier answer to whether or not she considered herself a feminist teacher most explicitly articulates this: she starts by explaining that feminism isn't a label she often uses for her teaching anymore, but by the end of her talking through feminism as a necessary epistemological perspective, she is almost forced to conclude that she is indeed a feminist teacher. While feminist pedagogy and general composition good practice have long advocated for self-reflections on pedagogy and teaching practices, the consistency of this tension across the interviews suggests that perhaps more space and opportunities for self-reflection on pedagogy would be valuable and insightful. In this way, reflecting on teaching is more than just good practice, but it is a means to knowledge about one's pedagogy and identity as a teacher.

Pedagogy to Prompts

One of the most challenging and interesting questions I asked teachers was whether or not they felt as though they explicitly or implicitly connected their pedagogical values to the text of their writing assignments. Due to the difficulty of this question, I usually did a lot of explaining the question and assuring participants that there was no right or wrong answer to

this. On the one hand, all teachers might want to quickly say yes—in order to be a good teacher, of course, connections are necessary; on the other hand, I suspect that many teachers find connections between practice and pedagogy to be a complex and murky process.

Informing this question around implicit and explicit connections is Laura Micciche's call for understanding feminist rhetorics as sites from which we can draw theories of writing that inform our pedagogies and assignments. Throughout the essay, "Writing as Feminist Rhetorical Theory," Micciche muses over the power of writing as a feminist method of agency and change by drawing on a variety of well-known feminist writers. She notes that feminist modes of writing (like play, interruption, questioning, etc;) shouldn't be prescriptively controlling writing assignments in terms of content or writing aims, but rather, they should invite us to see the potential power of alternative modes of writing that could inform a wider array of writing assignments. She explains:

A starting point in this effort is to make visible how a number of feminists conceptualize writing as a rhetorical act, in order not to neglect the ideological and political content of feminist rhetorical theory but to position this content as woven into writing practices. From here, we can extract pedagogical methods that capitalize on the fruitful intersections among feminist writing practices and feminist rhetorical theory. (174)

Micciche's call for writing modes informed by feminist rhetorics suggests a method for less explicitly feminist assignments that still carry feminist values. My interest in the explicit/implicit divide questions whether or not implicit feminist values are still visible and influential, and if so, how. In other words, I hope to understand how less explicit connections actually work: do teachers' feminist epistemological perspectives inherently transfer to assignments? And, how do teachers understand the influence of their pedagogy in relation to assignments?

Broken down into mini-sections that are organized by course level, this section positions each participant's response to this praxis question with some of their descriptions of the writing assignments that they contributed. Through this analysis, I locate the feminist politics and values that they suggest inform their writing assignments—whether the values are explicitly or implicitly utilized. Although most of these five teachers de-emphasize the feminist politics of their pedagogies in the interviews, feminism affords them an emphasis on epistemology that is potentially transformative and certainly political. The teachers who contributed FYW assignments, Leah and Elizabeth, emphasize epistemology as a central feminist questioning of being, identity, and knowledge construction; the upper-division course assignments discussed in the final section, by Deborah and Cornelia, continue the epistemological questioning with a focus on personal experiences as critically studied alongside of feminist theory and peer perspectives; and, the teacher who contributed the 200-level course, Gloria, emphasizes wholeness and emotions as a necessary part of intellectual engagement and the classroom for both students and teachers. Across these perspectives, feminist politics informs these teachers' assignments in ways that seek to enlarge and challenge students' understanding of the world, themselves, their multi-layered identities, and how they know what they know.

Interestingly, all five teachers offer a unique and different response to the question regarding whether or not they explicitly or implicitly connect pedagogy to prompt texts. This range of responses reflects the complexity of praxis, each teacher's individual positionality and contexts, their relationships to feminist pedagogy, and how course level and objectives relate to assignment design.

Two Perspectives on First Year Writing Assignments: Leah and Elizabeth

Both Leah and Elizabeth offer two different perspectives on assignments for first year writing (FYW) classes. Leah's course inquiry, and thus assignments, are guided, in part, by feminist content, whereas Elizabeth's course is a more traditional first year inquiry into literacy. While both teachers are aligned in their thinking that first year writing courses are primarily about writing skills and revision, these two perspectives both utilize a shared strand of feminist pedagogical values: critically interrogating how knowledge is constructed and situated, especially in relation to the politics of representation.

Leah's course is a Seminar in Composition that is openly designated as a Gender Studies inquiry. Her course uses an inquiry into romance, gender, and sexuality, and she shared a four assignment trajectory, including: a rhetorical analysis titled "Arguments for and Against Love" that uses two shared class texts (bell hooks' *All About Love: New Visions* and Laura Kipnis' *Against Love: A Polemic*); an assignment called the "Rhetorics of Courtship" that asks students to use Kenneth Burke and/or Catherine Bates to analyze the gendered rhetoric of courtship in a cultural text of their choosing; a third assignment called "Rhetorical Education for Romantic Engagement" that asks students to analyze two contemporary pedagogical romantic guides; and finally, a one minute instructional podcast that offers instructions for romantic engagement that interrogate cultural norms for romance and that are in the style of Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl." While the content of Leah's course—the rhetorics of romantic engagement—is clearly feminist, her articulation of the course suggests that the emphasis of the course was on writing and revision—not feminist ideas and frameworks. In response to the question regarding whether or

not her pedagogy explicitly informs her writing assignments, Leah was the only participant who gave a strong yes. She says:

Yeah, the relationship between my feminist pedagogy, my teaching philosophy, and my assignments: I mean, I think they're totally related. [...] there's always sort of my teaching philosophy and then the course objectives that aren't coming from me—like it's basically my job to do x, y, and z—is how I see it. [...] So, number one is to accomplish the course objectives—which I will in turn evaluate the students on—so I better spend the whole semester teaching them how to do those things. And then, how can I work in my teaching philosophy but still stick with the course objectives—is how I'm always thinking about the assignments.

[...] there's always sort of—ok, here's the things I want to teach or explore because that's what I am interested in, and then here's the course objectives and what the students need to know and like figuring out how to do the stuff I'm interested in in a way that's responsible and serves the course and what the students are supposed to get out of a course. It's kind of how I think about the assignments. I also think about them in terms of, just like the sequencing of them—not in some reductive there's one line of development to follow kind of way—but just like, what do I think coming into the class is a good starting point. And then, how can each assignment push students to do something slightly different with slightly more. So they're learning and being challenged. But at the same time, so that they can kind of see some kind of relationship between the different assignments—it's not just like: well, it's month one and now it's month two, so that's why we go from one to two. So that there's some progression of thinking.

Here, Leah is arguing that her thinking about assignments consists of (at least) four influences: the course objectives, her teaching philosophy, her own interests (in terms of topics for inquiry), and how the sequencing of the assignments can push students to do more.

When I asked Leah to talk me through her understanding of each of the assignments and the sequencing of them, she emphasized the main writing skills involved: moving from thinking about how arguments work (Arguments for and against love) to engaging with a theoretical framework (Using Burke/Bates to analyze a cultural text) to analysis of archival and contemporary cultural texts (Analysis of romantic pedagogical guides) to multimodal composing (the podcast). Throughout all of these, she noted, was an emphasis on radical revision that required rethinking of the main ideas and arguments of students' drafts. This skills-based

approach to writing is a common way to think about sequencing a set of assignments. About mid-way through these descriptions, Leah noted “And I’m not talking about gender at all, I realize, as I’m describing this. And that’s because that’s not the priority for sequencing for me in a first year writing class.” Her point is that, for her, a FYW course is about writing skills and revision of ideas and writing; and thus, not about feminist content, texts, or ideas.

In this moment, Leah is equating her feminist pedagogical perspective with explicit feminist content (discussions of feminist readings and/or theory). Even though Leah offered a dynamic and rich understanding of feminist pedagogy and thinking (see above sections), her understanding of the ways that feminism might inform assignments was still limited to content—specifically gender. Throughout her interview, Leah consistently offered a rich, dynamic, intersectional approach to identity that is at the heart of her feminism; nonetheless, in this instance, there is still this quick and reductive move to equate feminism to gender. I note this not to call out Leah, but rather because this moment is representative of two larger trends that I think are problematic: reducing feminism to only gender issues and conflating feminist pedagogy with feminist content. While neither of these are fair or accurate statements about feminism (or ones this teacher supports), I believe that they are pervasive feminist narratives that are part of the reason for some of the anxiety and hesitancy over the term feminism. Additionally, though, in her emphasis on writing skills and revision, Leah is ignoring the potential of the feminist politics in her assignments.

When I discussed my interest in the arguments that writing assignments make, Leah articulated the arguments that she sees her assignments making. She said:

I would say that every single assignment [in this course] is concerned with cultural norms and how they are taught—both through overtly pedagogical things, like the manual students looked

at, but also just kind of popular texts--like for the one assignment, students were engaging with the rhetorics of courtship in cultural texts—like, they looked at films, tv shows, things that they were familiar with in their everyday life that were interesting to them. But [they] thought about them as teaching cultural norms—so that I would say is a feminist value: paying attention to that and questioning that. And seeing writing as a way to do that.

I think that one argument that these assignments make is that the social relations that we might think of as being the most private, and based in feeling, are really deeply culturally conditioned in historically specific ways. And that we're all constantly being taught what to do and what not to do. And, that we can all do something about that—as thinkers and as writers and as just people relating to other people. So I would say that those are the main arguments and then I guess a related argument would be that part of that cultural pedagogy has to do with gender, and sexuality, and the other identities that those intersect with. But that's sort of implicit underneath the bigger argument I would say.

In my own analysis of her assignments (see Chapter 3), I had found a similar argument: that representations of, or arguments about, romance and courtship teach us about how to be in terms of gender, race, class, etc. as we engage in romantic relations. Although Leah says that the connection to gender and sexuality and other identities is implicit, her assignment texts each articulate a clear connection between cultural texts on romance and how they shape identity. Her assignment texts do not, however, articulate the individual and private emotional aspect of romantic relations or how these feelings and identities are culturally conditioned in historically specific ways, as she notes above.

While Leah makes a case for critically interrogating cultural norms, especially through writing, as an important feminist value that's informing her assignments, the feminist politics and potential seem to be less significant in her understanding of the assignment in our discussion. Regardless of the emphasis of the course, I would argue that the project of this set of assignments, interrogating cultural representations of romantic relations, has the potential to significantly challenge students' understanding of the world and themselves. Assignments that emphasize the politics of representation—even cultural representations of what we

believe to be ingrained, private and emotional aspects of relationships—offers students the opportunity to understand how their individual feelings and relationships have been shaped by popular constructions of romance; while not every student may find this critical analysis revolutionary, there is an inherent introspective element that implies the exigence for rethinking individual desires, emotions, relationships and even identity. Essentially, there is a direct relationship between critically studying cultural representations and our individual understandings and constructions of the self. As Susan Jarratt has explained in her essay on “Rhetoric and Representation in Postcolonial Feminist Writing,” “[Rhetoric] gives names to figures which structure relations in language and in the material world. Any choice of a figure is a discursive act that also simultaneously configures a material relationship of power and difference” (161). Through analyzing cultural representations, students are gaining an understanding of their own relationship and identity to the object of study, an understanding that offers the potential for change and new epistemological perspectives.

Less motivated by feminist content and inquiries than Leah’s Gender Studies designated FYW course, Elizabeth’s course is perhaps more typical of what we might expect from a required writing course. Simply called College Writing I, Elizabeth’s course moves through the following assignment trajectory: the first assignment is called a “Representations Assignment Sequence,” in which students write about their writing process, bring both an object and piece of music to class that represents them, and then write about the process of representing the self through objects and music; second, is the “Autobiography Assignment,” which is a literacy narrative that includes visual rhetorics; the third assignment is a “Literacy Biography,” in which students conduct primary research into someone else’s literacy history; and finally, a reflection

essay on both the writing and work involved with the literacy autobiography and biography.

Elizabeth's responses to the question about the connection between pedagogy and the text of assignments covers more ground, suggesting the complexity of the relationship. She started by saying:

I think that for me it's [(the connection between pedagogy and assignment texts)] probably both [implicit and explicit]. [...] I think that there are ways because I just approach the world from a feminist epistemological viewpoint that I just see things that way and maybe don't even... that it's tacit. But I think it's explicit in the way that [I] think about what I want students to get from the class, which is that I don't want them to just get done with the class and be done. [...] I want them to take something out of that class that has something to do with the way that they think about the world, or think about how we know what we know. Or think about how they represent themselves in the world using literacy. And so there's a way that it's explicit, then, too.

[...] one of the things about writing assignments for me—that being explicit about my expectations for the assignment is probably one of the foremost guidelines for me when I write an assignment. [...] I tell students that my assignments are like a contract between the two of us—so, I expect that they will take the assignment after I've passed it out, work on it, mark it up, highlight it, ask questions, and then, the next day come back with any questions or anything that they're not clear about. And if they don't ask questions, then I'm assuming that they understand exactly what I'm expecting of them and that they're willing to do that—or that they would've said something. So I think that that's really important to me—that students, when we ask them to do something, know what we're asking them to do. And so, the kinds of things that you're asking me about with the assignments, I think a lot of it probably is more evident in the classroom discussions around the assignments than in the assignments themselves.

So, in that first year assignment,... I mean one of the things I always struggle with in writing assignments is that first paragraph—that describes the goals of the assignment. Or the description of the assignment itself. I always have a hard time putting that into words. It's much easier for me to talk about it and have students talk about it in class and to have conversations around it.

In this trajectory of responses, the difficulty of the question itself is revealed: Elizabeth's thinking about the relationship between pedagogy and assignments moves from her larger pedagogical goals for all students for every class to thinking about what is explicit in her assignments to her struggles as a teacher developing assignments. As an interviewer, I usually

acknowledged that this question is a particularly challenging one, and thus I encouraged the teachers to follow their own train of associations. A few things are revealed here, though: Elizabeth feels feminist pedagogy is the exigence for her larger goal for students to critically rethink how they think about the world and thus, to understand their own epistemological framework. She acknowledges that this aim, like her feminist pedagogy, is both explicit and implicit in her writing assignments. Indeed, her assignments are analyzed (in Chapter 3) as making epistemological arguments about the construction of knowledge and identity—so, I read her assignments as making clear arguments about this. However, her response suggests that this aim might be a more implicit one in terms of how she had originally conceived of the assignment trajectory.

This initial murkiness over explicit/implicit connections naturally brought Elizabeth to what she considers to be necessarily explicit in her assignments: her expectations for students. She explains that assignments often develop into discussions of how students understand what is being asked of them—and that these classroom interactions are a space that is potentially more fruitful than the text of the assignment. When Elizabeth suggests that classroom discussions of assignments are probably the space where “the kinds of things that you’re asking me about with the assignments” happen, I believe she is suggesting that the class has the opportunity to discuss any of the assumptions or arguments in the assignment—or other more complex issues. Her connection between the assignment and the discussion of the assignment is also related to her acknowledging that the first paragraph, or what the writing assignment essentially is, is the most challenging aspect of writing it for her. I imagine that many writing teachers understand classroom discussions as the essential element in how students

understand writing assignments—whether or not they offer complex developed prompts or shorter ones. However, I would argue that both classroom moments are essential and valuable; but, it's possible that our understanding of the significance of the classroom discussion of assignments allows teachers to place less value into the assignment prompt text—which research from the Project Information Literacy (PIL) team suggests is a valuable resource for students regardless of how much emphasis a teacher places on the assignment prompt handout; specifically, PIL research found that about 75% of students believe that the assignment handout is one of the most valuable resources they have, specifically for completing research papers (Head and Eisenberg, 2009; 2010).

Like Leah's, Elizabeth's interview also brought up the tension over feminist content. Her discussion of feminist content brings her back to her initial argument that her feminist pedagogy is most exemplified in her aim to help students to critically engage with their epistemological perspective—how they know what they know and how they represent themselves in the world. Indeed, this central feminist epistemological investment was one that came up several times in her interview. Here she explains it in terms of the lack of feminist content in her assignment:

[...] so the first one was representations. [...] So, you know the word feminism doesn't appear in these assignments. It would be easy to not even see these as feminist assignments. But for me, the focus on that first one—the representations assignment—[...] the feminist impulse there I think is to focus on, to get students talking and sharing and creating an open atmosphere where they feel comfortable with one another, feel comfortable with who they are, and to get them to think about identity as a process of construction. That it's not a matter of just being born who you are and then you just kind of live out whatever plan was made for you. But, that along the way, we make a whole series of choices about the kind of people we're going to be in the world.

And that representations assignment will focus on the kinds of choices that people make and why they make those kinds of choices.

So then, they go onto do this literacy biography. The most important thing in that assignment sequence for me is [...] the reflection [...] I really love the way the students take up that assignment, because it asks them to think about how they made sense of what they made sense of... And I think of that as...the root of feminism: the questioning how it is that we know what we think we know. And, thinking about how the processes by which knowledge gets made and solidified. And, so the conversations that we have around that writing the biography and autobiography—are for me, some of the best things that we do in that class.

Elizabeth is connecting this understanding of how we know what we know more clearly to identity construction. The construction of identity, especially as an epistemological consideration, is a main theme across many of the writing assignments studied in the larger corpus (Chapter 3). However, Elizabeth is more clearly articulating that as the aspect that makes her assignments feminist; instead of feminist content, she sees this deeper questioning in regards to the self and ways of knowing and being as the main feminist value of her assignments. While Elizabeth doesn't frame this discussion as feminist politics, her discussion of representations and the construction of identity does get at the relationship between these larger theoretical considerations and the self; that this epistemological inquiry into how we know what we know does affect individuals' agency, choices, their own identities, and how they understand the world.

While both of these perspectives, Elizabeth's and Leah's, primarily focus on the first year writing course as emphasizing writing and revision skills, feminism affords their writing assignments the main critical lens for questioning. In Elizabeth's aim of helping students to question how they know what they know and Leah's argument that cultural representations of romance teach us how to be gendered, raced, classed, etc. people in romantic relations, there is a larger questioning of the relationships between identity and the self in relation to epistemology that is informed by feminist politics. The belief that feminist pedagogical values

might be implicit may actually hide the political and ideological work of the feminist lens that supports these assignments: the underlying assumption is that our understandings of romance, identity, how we act and think, and how we know what we know are not neutral, but rather these basic epistemological frameworks are shaped by a number of influences that are cultural, historical, related to positionality, materiality, and other contexts. While the feminist pedagogical scholarship of the 1990s emphasized the personal more than either Leah or Elizabeth, scholars like Min-Zhan Lu, Wendy Hesford, and Susan Jarratt each similarly argued for ways to teach and understand how knowledge, especially in relation to identity, is constructed and then translated through representations in writing. Elizabeth's and Leah's assignments both continue to draw from and forward this feminist investment in ways that are more contemporary (i.e., using multimodality) and relevant to their specific institutional contexts.

A 200-Level Course Perspective: Gloria

Gloria contributed two assignments—the final project and the final oral exam—for a 200 level short fiction course. Gloria's version of the course focused on short stories by Women of Color (WOC) across the African diaspora. In the interview, she noted that the course typically was taught by studying 19th and 20th century American short stories; so, she saw her course inquiry as a rather big departure from the way it was traditionally taught—and even labeled in the course catalog. While this course is more clearly English literature than a writing course, I know Gloria as a rhetoric and composition graduate student. In the interview, I asked her whether she approached the course from more of a literary or writing perspective; she said her approach was “50/50.” In regards to the rhetorical approach, she said:

We did come at it from a rhetorical standpoint in terms of—what are these women trying to actually do with the genre itself? And, we talked a lot about ethos... [...] We talked a lot about language politics as well because—particularly we looked at Caribbean women writers—and there’s a lot of discussion on, you know, Native dialects and patois versus taking on the standard forms of language. And what that says about class and appropriateness and how those writers were trying to break into the genre of the short story—who’s readers are predominantly white audiences from abroad. And how do you, you know, establish credibility and break into this [audience]?

Despite sometimes rigid disciplinary borders, Gloria’s description is a reminder of the potential hybridity of teaching approaches and the blurred boundaries, especially between a literature and rhetoric course.

While Gloria’s course and teaching blur some boundaries, I asked her to be interviewed not only because of the feminist perspective I saw in her two writing assignments, but also because of the uniqueness of them. The first contributed assignment is a final project for which students had four different options: for the first, students could choose two short stories and create word clouds (using Wordle) to represent the texts digitally and visually, and then they had to write a compare and contrast paper; for the second option, students could select one of the short stories and write a 3-4 page alternative ending, and then they had to write a reflection on their choices; for the third option, students could write about and engage with a specific story—Sofia Quintero, aka Black Artemis’ “The Rapper”—for which the class had Skyped with the author; and for the final option, students could write a traditional essay using either class texts or other stories from WOC in the African diaspora.

The second assignment that Gloria contributed was the final oral exam for the course. Gloria told me the exam was an hour long, full class discussion during finals week that she completely removed herself from as a participant and leader. In the oral exam assignment handout, she offers 10 heuristic questions for students to prepare, though they were also

allowed to bring notes, books, and any other resources to the exam. She explained to me (and with students) that “The person who gets the A on the exam is the person who is able to contribute 4 or more substantive comments and/or possible a question that moves the conversation forward.” She said that as a class, they did a lot of work the week before the exam discussing what counted as comments or questions that move the discussion forward.

Before getting into some of the details of these assignments, I asked Gloria to talk about how she understood the connection between her pedagogy and writing assignments. While I had chosen her to interview precisely because of her carefully crafted and interesting assignments, her response to this question was grounded in honest self-reflection and the limitations of her position as a graduate student. She said:

[...] I will say I think that’s still one of my weaknesses when it comes to linking with my feminist pedagogy... [connecting pedagogy to assignment prompts] because, I’m still a grad student. And I’m working on all the other stuff that I’m working on. So, with the exception of the WOC short fiction course, I don’t design a lot of my own prompts.

Yeah, so even in the feminist 102 course [a FYW course inquiry she’s designed on Barbie], I was still playing a lot off of [shared] prompts [...] So, I think, to the extent that I try to promote a lot of freedom in terms of what they choose to write about, so I think that part is align with feminist pedagogy. In the [WOC] short fiction course, I don’t remember all of the writing assignments anymore.... But, I think that was where I really made that concerted effort to do that. But, I’m not where I want to be with it; I’m not where I want to be with it in terms of really purposefully, intentionally aligning with feminist assignments.

Gloria was referencing shared writing assignments from her previous institution’s shared curriculum. In fact, she also gave credit to the idea for the oral exam to another professor at her current institution, who had developed it primarily to reduce the labor of grading both an institutionally required final exam and a final paper. Throughout the interview, Gloria felt confident talking about the concrete things she was doing with students, the assignments, the classroom environment, and she also referenced many of the specific conversations she had

with students around various texts and topics; however, she felt much less certain and comfortable naming the pedagogical aspects of what she was doing. Her reasoning was her status as an ABD graduate student who has re-located and is teaching at a new institution.

While Gloria's institutional status, labor, and material conditions are constraints on her ability to focus on the pedagogical aspects of her assignments and teaching, I suspect that, like Gloria, many teachers are less comfortable naming the specific pedagogical values that inform activities and assignments; thus, this perspective may be representative of other committed writing teachers.

In this quick exchange, I re-assured Gloria of the values I saw in her assignments and she elaborated on some of the labor-based challenges:

Kate: You know, I picked you to interview, in part, because I saw how conscious those two assignments you gave me were. For me, they're really empowering to students, valuing students' experiences, and then, just the fact that you're valuing different kinds of knowledges in the options. So those were things I loved about them.

Gloria: I may just be being kind of critical of myself. I just know that once I have.. once I'm teaching more of the courses that I would want to teach... and I can still do this in the spring, when I do the English 102. I think I want to be more about pushing the boundaries, in terms of both assignments and the different kinds of knowledge that we're allowing people to produce and explore. I think it's also hard though, depending on the department that you're in and what those department expectations are. So for the last two years, I've been trying to learn what those department expectations are. You know, I have my own idea—but, I don't want to be, you know, a rebel or a big outlier in terms of that and not fulfill what they're asking to do with the students. I think it may be trickier depending on the department and also depending on the level of courses that you're teaching, especially with those first year comp classes.

Here, Gloria offers a larger understanding of the array of material constraints on course design and pedagogy: institutional status, ability to design one's own courses, course level, department learning objectives, and departmental culture. Often, pedagogical scholarship emphasizes particular teaching strategies, values, and practices; however, Gloria's responses

suggest that pedagogies and their development are related to individual teachers' institutional location, department, larger university context, along with other economic, material, and potentially cultural constraints.

In regards to the final exam with the four options, Gloria's responses emphasized giving students freedom, flexibility, and choice to get what they needed out of the projects. In addition to choices though, in her responses about the options, there is also a sense of a co-learning atmosphere in the classroom. Early on in the interview, in regards to her pedagogy, she explained her interest in co-learning; she said,

And the way that I ran the class was very student-centered and we really worked toward producing knowledge together. You know, not me coming out with these answers about this is what Caribbean women's short fiction is all about. But really—what do you see there? What do we see there? And how can we make sense of it?

Her claim to working towards producing knowledge with students is especially hinted at in her discussion of the alternative ending option and the Sophia Quintero short story. In regards to the later, she told the following story:

One of the other options was to write an alternate ending to one of the stories. Because we liked some of the endings and some of them were: [an aggravated] "Ugh!" One story in particular, called "Widow's Walk," it's by.. I forget, it's a Caribbean women writer... [... Opal Palmer Adisa]. The protagonist's name is June Plume, and she's so preoccupied with her husband and family. Her husband's a fisherman and he's always gone. And one day he doesn't return from his trip. And she's so distraught about this—until finally, she kind of embraces the fact that he's gone and she has to create this new life and this independence. And she's done all this reflection and she's like: "yeah, this is gonna my time. This is gonna be about my life!" [...]. And then, she gets word that he's been found and he's on his way back. And she runs back to the house to clean it up and cook! [laughter]

So, they had the option of rewriting that ending to, you know, imagine what her life would have possibly been—or any of the other stories. But that was one in particular that I remember we were all... [a disappointed] "ooohh..." But we talked about, ok, why would the author do that? Why would the author bring him back? By bringing him back, she allows us to see how the brain works, you know—patriarchy is in this woman's life. And even though she has all these dreams, you know everything is still going to evolve around this husband. So, that was very interesting.

In Gloria's explanation of her thinking about the alternative ending assignment option, it's clear that the assignment choice developed from this classroom discussion. While she didn't explicitly articulate this discussion as an origin, her descriptions of some of the assignment options suggests that through their collective feelings, thinking, and discussions of some of the texts, certain options naturally emerged as interesting and desirable. In this example, their collective class emotional response to this reading is what motivated the assignment task. While other options—like the word cloud compare and contrast assignment option—were described as coming from her teaching objectives, this option clearly developed out of a collective desire for a more feminist ending. Pedagogically, this moment aligns with Gloria's earlier statement about bringing her whole self to the classroom: she is clear that it's not only students who were disappointed with how the story ended, but she shared in their emotional disappointment in the character. Allowing herself to be a whole person with real reactions and emotions in the classroom may have created more space from which to deal with those emotions—in part, through an assignment option that allowed students to re-write an alternative ending to a story. While not all assignments necessarily need to or should be developed out of emotional responses, in this case, the assignment option allows students to turn a very emotional response to a text into something more critically invested and analyzed. More than just writing an alternative ending, students had to justify their reasoning, choices, and thinking in a reflection essay, too.

Despite Gloria's hesitancy in regards to talking about pedagogy, from her reflections there are several strategies and pedagogical values that feminism affords her assignments, including: collaborative co-inquiry; developing assignments from classroom discussions and

desires; acknowledging and utilizing classroom emotions for critical thinking; valuing alternative ways of making knowledge (through assignment choices and modes of engagement); and holding students accountable to each other for co-learning. While these strategies can certainly come from a number of locations, they are also united in Gloria's own reference to bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress*. hooks describes her own approach to learning as "emerging from a philosophical standpoint emphasizing the union of mind, body, and spirit, rather than the separation of these elements" (18). This description of learning and teaching that connects all elements of being suggests a commitment to being a whole teacher, but also listening to, acknowledging, validating, and responding to the emotional responses of students and particular classroom moments. For hooks, engaged pedagogy—drawing inspiration from both critical and feminist pedagogies—also includes an emphasis on learning that involves the teacher and students collaboratively thinking about issues and coming to different and new perspectives together (14-15). Both of these elements of hooks' work are evident in Gloria's assignments and approach to the classroom. While these values are not necessarily new, they are certainly no less infused with feminist politics and ideologies. Feminism affords Gloria the space to be a complete, "whole" human as a teacher, to model being "whole" for students, to learn and question alongside of her students, and to utilize emotion for critical engagement (through assignment design).

Two Perspectives on Assignments for Upper-Division Courses: Deborah and Cornelia

Two participating teachers that were interviewed, Deborah and Cornelia, contributed upper-division courses. The shift to upper-division courses allows teachers greater flexibility as

well as the opportunity for more emphasis on explicitly feminist content. While both courses are explicitly feminist in content, Deborah's course is motivated by the content or inquiry (women's rhetorics), while Cornelia's course is motivated by the development and refinement of creative nonfiction. These two perspectives both place a greater pedagogical value on students' personal experiences; in terms of feminist pedagogical values, this affords students the opportunity to critically consider their epistemologies—how they view the world and why—especially in relation to the content being studied. While this feminist aim is similar to that of the FYW courses examined above by Leah and Elizabeth, both of these courses are more overt about personal experience as a necessary starting point for thinking, knowledge-building, and moving forward in the world.

Deborah contributed her syllabus and three assignments for a 300 level course called Women's Rhetorics. Instead of *feminist* rhetorics, Deborah explained that within the contexts of a southern, Christian school, focusing on *women's* rhetorics was more persuasive. Although she dropped the "f" word from the title, much of the trajectory of readings and units are consistent with a feminist rhetorics course. In addition to more traditional feminist rhetorics, Deborah included some contemporary women's rhetorics that were from within their state and some that offered more conservative perspectives as well. The course assignments included: a "Personal Theory Essay" that asked students to theorize about the relationship between gender and rhetoric through a consideration of their experiences and the course readings; a "Rhetorical Context Presentation and Report" that asked students to individually present historical context for one of the women rhetors of the course (and write up a report); and a "Rhetorical Analysis Project" that asked students to individually select a contemporary woman

rhetor to study and analyze. While the final analysis was individual, Deborah notes that students were put in working groups around similar topics and had to present their research to the class.

In regards to connecting her pedagogy to the assignment prompts, Deborah was the only participant who said this process was entirely implicit. After discussing her assignments at length and sharing her perspective on her feminist values, she said:

No, I don't think it is conscious [connecting pedagogy to assignment prompts]. I think that the kinds of values that I just articulated—about connecting to the personal, thinking of students themselves as sites of knowledge-making where there are assignments where they have to ask their own questions and do their own research, the values that involve students bringing what they know to the class and students co-leading the class, even as I know that that's messy, and I'm not as good at it because I'm a little bit too nervous about things going wrong—and that's my own problem. So, I'm conscious of those elements—I would name those as products of feminist pedagogy. But I'm not conscious of [what] this needs to look like—I'm not labeling those things as I do them, but I am putting those things into my classes pretty consistently.

Deborah has a really clear sense of the kinds of values that are a part of her feminist pedagogy: connecting topics to students' personal experiences, using students' prior experiences as knowledge, and creating a class that is co-led by students. While she knows that these are values she consistently brings into all of her classes, she is less certain regarding the specifics of how these values get articulated in concrete classroom moments. Deborah is talking specifically about the text of the writing assignment. In other words, her classroom trajectory and assignment projects are generally motivated by these values; she is less certain, however, about whether or not they are clearly articulated in the text of her writing prompts or other more specific classroom activities. I suspect that Deborah's perspective is most representative of how many writing teachers might feel: a clear understanding of pedagogical values that

influence course design, but less certainty regarding their connection to and clear articulation in the assignment prompts.

For her first assignment, the “Personal Theory” essay, Deborah explains that the sequencing and goals were content-based, or goals that emphasize key concepts and ideas from the texts. She explains:

[...] I wanted to do some of the canonical and historical work—and Available Means is such a huge text, I had to decide how to carve out a piece of it. And I decided I would just look at the women who were sort of central to the big movements in American feminist work, so the suffrage movement and then the women’s movement in the 70s. [...] I actually start with the present: I start with Sandra Fluke and Rush Limbaugh’s blow up—in order to make the point that this is all still relevant. I mean, I knew that, I had all women students... which [...] just happened. But I knew that I would have many women students in the class who were anti-feminist. They would be taking the class because they liked me, or because they needed it to fulfill a rhetoric requirement, or they needed it to fulfill some other requirement or to fulfill a writing emphasis requirement. I would not have a room of friendly feminist faces. So I was just really mindful of trying to bring them along in a way that would not be pushy.

[...] I started with the personalizing theory [assignment]. [...] So I chose the pieces at the beginning—so Lorde, and Rich, and bell hooks, and folks like that—who I thought were articulating some key principles, theoretical principles. [...] and I think the first stuff, the first several readings are mostly about language; and then there are several readings about other kinds of cultural differences that intersect with gender [...]. But I had this sense that I was identifying key ideas like revision, cultural difference, and so on. But I wanted them to engage with the reading by asking themselves: where in their own experiences they’ve had things happen that resonated. And I think because that’s really what happened for me: that was the way I came to feminism—I read those things and the light bulb went off in my head and said “oh, that explains this, that explains this.” So I wanted them to look at the readings not as just academic readings that they had to write essays about, but that they really were invited to connect to their own lives.

In this reflective account of her thinking about the course trajectory and the first assignment, Deborah is consistently emphasizing her desire to make feminist ideas and rhetorics more persuasive for students. She suggests that the assignment’s connections to the personal comes from her own “coming to feminism” moment. This aim also informs the trajectory of readings: starting with contemporary rhetorics and key concepts is intended to help students to

immediately see the relevance of these conversations. What Deborah doesn't emphasize in her description of the assignment is the emphasis it places on students theorizing about the relationship between gender and rhetoric through a consideration of their own experiences and the shared texts. The assignment's writing task—theorizing through synthesis of personal experiences and shared texts—points back to her pedagogical aim of valuing students as knowledge-makers. Similar to the critical use of personal experiences that the feminist writing assignments surveyed from 1990s scholarship used (see Chapter 1), the task to theorize prioritizes students' ability to not only connect to ideas, but to produce new knowledge that is informed by the shared texts and their experiences, identity, material and economic factors, historical influences, etc. Although Deborah didn't frame it this way, the emphasis on critical personal connections draws from the longstanding feminist argument that the personal is political; here, students are encouraged to understand that social theories of identity should be informed and shaped by real peoples' experiences, histories, locations, etc.

Deborah explained to me that one of her biggest challenges was fully giving students control to lead the class when appropriate. She talked about how she had not been as effective at giving students agency for the second assignment, which gave students the opportunity to lead the class through a presentation on the historical context of the rhetors being studied that day. She said that the historical context presentation presented challenges for her—to give students control over the class—but also that “students are not prepared to be in a really non-hierarchical class; they prefer to hear from you; they prefer for you to control the material.”

She goes on, however, to describe the final assignment and how it was more successful:

I'm just as fond of the last assignment as I am of the first assignment. The second one is the one that is the most traditional—and I didn't do as good of a job of turning it over to them. But in

the last assignment, they all picked a contemporary woman rhetor—and that could be anybody. And this came up at one of the Fem Rhet sessions, when someone was saying: well what if they wanted to do an anti-abortion person? And I'm like: yeah, well they get to do an anti-abortion person because that person has the potential for influence and [...] she is a woman rhetor. You may not like her rhetoric, but she is a woman rhetor.

So in that last one, we had all kinds of things that you might predict: like, Beyonce—and we had really interesting conversation. They showed a video clip of Beyonce video—and we were trying to talk about whether—she's speaking words (I can't remember the name of the song) but the lyrics are very feminist, pro-woman rhetoric, and then, she's writhing around on the stage in this, you know, gold lamae, g-string. So we were trying to talk about whether using your body in that way is a feminist thing or not a feminist thing. Or, is she embodying some kind of conflict about women?

In her discussion of the final project, there are some quick hints at some of the content-based tensions that she had to think about when designing the assignment and that students had to grapple with in their own work. The tensions about how feminism is defined—what counts and what doesn't count—are clear in both the question from the Feminisms and Rhetorics audience member and in the students' engagement with Beyoncé. Indeed, this tension seems to be one of the motivating questions of course: what are women's rhetorics? And, how to we understand their value? These underlying questions coupled with the assignments' emphasis on students as researchers and theorizers means that students are encouraged to locate their own ways into women's rhetorics and feminism on their own terms—another move that seeks to present feminism persuasively.

Unlike some of the other courses discussed above, with this upper-division Women's Rhetorics course, Deborah's goals were more content-driven: she wanted students to understand the content, connect to it, and add to it. She is also, however, motivated by some central feminist pedagogical values: collaborative learning, valuing students as knowledge-makers, and connecting to personal experiences. From Deborah's emphasis on the personal,

however, there are some nuances regarding what feminism affords her assignments: First, like the shift in the use of the personal from the 1980s to the 1990s, there is a difference between valuing and connecting to personal experiences and actually theorizing through a synthesis of experiences and readings; this movement from simply connecting personal experiences to texts, to then producing new theories regarding how rhetoric works suggests a deeper and more critical grappling with both (experience and theory). This understanding of personal experiences as being central to the process of theorizing, understanding the world, and feminist politics is a central feminist pedagogical value that has historically been used in a number of ways in the classroom. Deborah understands the personal as important as a site for knowledge-making; to extend her argument, the critical use of the personal exemplifies a feminist politics that argues for personal experiences as a necessary component for understanding issues of power, gender inequality, and oppression. Although some students may have more privileged experiences, the emphasis on the personal in conversation with critical theory still fosters a more socially constructed and situated epistemological perspective.

Second, Deborah provides some concrete strategies for making feminist content more persuasive, including: starting the semester with contemporary women's rhetorics and then moving to the historical rhetorics; encouraging students to study how their own experiences can be understood through central ideas and concepts; including a wide array of *women's* rhetorics and not avoiding more conservative perspectives; and, allowing the tension around definitions of feminism to remain open and conflicting. The emphasis on being persuasive with feminism suggests a common fear and anxiety regarding student resistance, beliefs in more media-derived negative definitions of feminism, and a more basic fear of the rejection of

feminist politics and investments. Additionally, though, the goal of a persuasive and rhetorical presentation of feminist rhetorics suggests a flexibility with feminism—that feminism is useful and valuable, once understood and critically engaged with, for all students.

Similar to Deborah’s upper-division course, Cornelia’s creative nonfiction courses emphasize students’ experiences; however, their experiences become individual inquiries of the course, and creative nonfiction is a method studied for accessing them. Cornelia contributed two creative nonfiction courses, one 400 level upper-division and one graduate course, that each use different course inquiries. The upper-division course, the one I’m focusing on here, was called “Studies in Creative Nonfiction,” with a course inquiry (or sub-title) on “Stranger than Fiction: LGBT Creative Nonfiction.” The course is cross-listed between a writing program and LGBTQ studies, which is an interdisciplinary undergraduate program that offers courses and a minor. The creative nonfiction course offers a different method and trajectory of assignments than typical composition courses. The class is writing intensive in that the bulk of the course work is 69 short writing prompts that are offered at the end of the syllabus; these writing prompts include in-class writing prompts, prompts for homework, and revision-based prompts. Most of the class, then, involves writing for these prompts. Additionally, however, students are asked to attend a certain number of LGBTQ events outside of class and complete some writing based on them, and then their final project is a portfolio that includes all of their writing for the semester. Due to the nature of this assignment trajectory—and the lack of more specified traditional writing assignments—Cornelia’s responses and reflections are less directed by a unit-by-unit movement of assignments.

She started by explaining her larger philosophy and objectives for the writing assignments. She said:

[...] My belief, my philosophy [...] is if I can get the person who is thinking and writing to tap into their own physical and material experiences and access their own raw data, so to speak, which is their own experience. If I can get them to access that in a really meaningful way, not as it has been told to them or as it has been edited or filtered, but to get them to revisit those experiences in a focused way—so it depends on the classroom what we’re focusing on, right? The lens shifts depending on the theme of the class. But, the idea is, ok we’re going to focus on this particular area and they’re gonna go back to their raw material, so to speak.

And then, depending on the readings and the other people in the classroom, once they start sharing that with other people and also looking at it in relation to the other material, hopefully they’ll be able to make some leaps conceptually to understanding what it is that they’ve actually experienced. But, hopefully, in a way that breaks through whatever limitations have been on their own knowledge of themselves. And [...] the simplest way I think about it is, often people don’t know what they know. They don’t actually *know* what they know. So how do I put together a sequence of assignments and of readings and of exchanges between people where they begin to be able to lay hands on what they know and put it in some kind of context.

Here, Cornelia explains both her main teaching philosophy and her method for enacting it.

While some of the assignments discussed above emphasized epistemological questioning, especially about identity, as a main goal in assignments, Cornelia’s philosophy seems a bit more pointed. More than just helping students to understand how identity is constructed, she’s really encouraging students to become more self-aware and locate a stronger and more clear sense of self and voice. In feminist terms, this seeking of the true self is consciousness-raising—a clear understanding of the self—who one actually is, what one has been told to be, and the various factors that conflict, suppress, and complicate the true self. This is reminiscent of the early feminist assignments of the 1970s-80s that were also influenced by expressivism in composition; very similar to Cornelia’s, in these historical assignments the personal was used as a means of locating a true self in relation to cultural, social and economic influences that construct identity-based beliefs about how and who we should be. While consciousness-raising

is certainly a lofty goal, Cornelia is also clear throughout her interview that she understands the classroom as a space that is limited by the institutional context, the group of students' personalities and identities, and the time constraints of classes within a semester framework; however, the more explicitly feminist aim of consciousness-raising may also be more easily accessed due to the opportunities that creative nonfiction writing fosters.

When I asked Cornelia about whether or not she thought pedagogy and assignment prompts were connected, she clarified her philosophy and method a bit, saying:

[...] I have confidence that if I frame these prompts in a way that both embodies my core and fundamental belief that laying hands on experience are the building blocks of someone's theoretical direction or a way they can go, developing theoretically—my approach is there is both that aspect and my absolute confidence that if I set up a set of assignments that are pretty open ended, provocative, and hopefully give people access to their own knowledge—coming in at this way, coming in at that way, trying out a bunch of stuff—my absolute confidence that each student could, not every student does, but each student can assemble a body of work that they will be able to pull from and have a more or less extended piece of thinking and conceptualization around their life. In other words, it's process-oriented in terms of them going into their own lives and looking for this material, and then taking the material and working with it, and arranging it and seeing how it comments on itself, in a way, so that, by the end, the person has not just the recollections and the pieces of experience, but are able to stand back and say: oh, look at what this person knows, look at what this person is doing around this particular issue, if it's gender and sexuality in 422, or other issues in other classes.

In this explanation, which I understand simplistically as an affirmative to the question of connecting pedagogy to prompts, Cornelia is suggesting that through the use of "open ended, provocative" prompts, students have the opportunity to really gain a glimpse of their way of being and understanding the world. Essentially, she's offering them a process that may grant them a view of their true self, their epistemology, and potentially what their current way of engaging with the world means. Consciousness-raising, in this way, is a highly political goal that challenges students to consider whether or not they're aware of their own epistemological and ontological views, and the variety of social, cultural, economic, and historical influences that

construct their views. While consciousness-raising emerges in second wave feminist liberation work, this same political aim is often found in later feminist aims for critically interrogating the self in relation to power structures, inequalities, etc.

Due to the difficulty of talking about all of her prompts in detail, I asked Cornelia if she had a favorite writing prompt. She said:

I'd say that one of the favorite prompts that's closest to my heart in terms of its political and creative aspects is the prompt that I give about writing in the voices of home. Well, obviously different people react to that in different ways, but what it does do is open up space for Multi-language writing and the writing of the forbidden. And it helps people tune their ears... and it asks them to go back, very physically, but not to depend on their eyes. So it has a lot of components to it.

And, it often produces some really, really interesting writing. If people will go to that place. And I like it also because it is an overlap of the public and private. [...] But that is, you know, one of the quintessential issues of women's liberation—is the public-private separation and overlap. And I think, you know, that assignment, by opening up the privacy of the home through memory and actually having to transcribe the voices. And I do it in the classroom as an in-class prompt because I want people to write really rapidly whatever they remember hearing and then go back to it and work on it—it breaks into that secrecy and privacy of the home. And it opens it up, you know, to the public ear and the public gaze—and it has a lot of potential for shattering that false dichotomy between the domestic female space and the public male space.

This example prompt suggests how Cornelia uses specific frameworks for helping students to recall experiences through memory. Here, she asks students to focus in on the voices and languages they heard growing up in their homes. She also noted that she has since revised this prompt to be more inclusive for deaf students; instead of asking students to locate the voices they *heard* growing up, she focuses on communication in general by asking students to recall how their family communicated to one another. In this prompt, Cornelia is interested in the possibilities that it has the potential to open up, specifically prompting students who are multi-lingual to consider how languages were used and to write potentially with those languages. While this prompt likely encourages a wide array of responses, the benefit of having so many

prompts in a class is the ability to offer more possibilities, like utilizing multiple languages. I would argue that this pedagogical hope (multilingual writing opportunities) suggests a larger breadth of inclusive practices that could be worked into more traditional composition writing assignments simply through open-ended questions that foster possibilities.

Cornelia's explanation of her favorite prompt is also a clear example of how a small writing prompt can clearly connect to feminist issues. She argues that by asking students to remember, write about, critically engage with, and share their writing about family and home communications, she is also encouraging students to see what traditionally has been considered a private, female space as also a space that is constructed through a variety of forces in specific context and a space that can (and should) be held accountable to the public. More than just being influenced by pedagogical values, Cornelia's writing prompt is informed by a specific cultural binary (gendered private/public spheres) that has been taken up by feminist activists and scholars.

Across both Cornelia and Deborah's assignments and pedagogical approaches, there are several similarities in terms of what feminism affords them. Both of these perspectives place a strong emphasis on student knowledge that comes from critically examining experiences. This feminist pedagogical value, as articulated in these two courses, merges the feminist composition research of the 1970s-80s and 1990s (as discussed in Chapter 1). The ways both teachers discuss valuing student experiences is reminiscent of earlier feminist arguments for empowering students to locate their voices and true selves—values that crossed feminist pedagogies (Annas; Howe; Caywood and Overing) and the expressivist composition work of Peter Elbow, Murray, Macrorie, and others. Additionally, though, in both of these perspectives,

there is a move to situate personal experiences alongside and against feminist theory and scholarship, specific local, historical, and material contexts, and various publics. The move to critically situate the personal develops out of the feminist pedagogical values of the 1990s, by scholars like Susan Jarratt, Wendy Hesford, Min-Zhan Lu, and others. Even though less feminist scholarship has emphasized critical engagement with the personal recently, as these example courses and assignments suggest, this feminist perspective is still valuable, relevant, and used by contemporary writing teachers.

Unlike the FYW and 200-level course perspectives examined, however, both Deborah and Cornelia are more explicit with the feminist emphases of these courses in their reflections and course content; in both cases, their reflections suggest that the explicit feminist content offers them the time to scaffold feminist ideas better. For Deborah, in addition to learning about feminist rhetorics, she suggests the topic allows her to scaffold feminist rhetorics and theories in ways that are more persuasive and rhetorical, a move that gives students time to grapple with and come to terms with feminism on their own. For Cornelia, the scaffolding of prompts is the means to accessing knowledge about the self and what it means (i.e., consciousness-raising). While Cornelia says less about her course inquiry, the knowledge about the self is often framed in relation to the course inquiry—as in, students come to understand their perspectives and views in terms of their experiences (real and as they’ve been constructed) in relation to say LGBTQ issues and theories. Thus the explicit semester-long inquiries into feminist topics offer these teachers the opportunity to have students engaging with their goals and materials longer and in a more carefully scaffolded way, potentially fostering greater learning and engagement.

Concluding Discussion

Throughout these teachers' reflections, there are numerous moments of complication, hesitancy, and referencing of a variety of scholarly and material influences in addition to feminism; thus, my aim is not to simply suggest that the main feminist influence and politics I culled from their reflections is the only feminist aspect or that feminism is the main influence. Indeed, across these reflections, the participants share many feminist values, including: valuing students' personal experiences, valuing multiple knowledges and ways of making meaning, feminism as an epistemological questioning of the self and knowledge construction, understandings of the personal and knowledge as constructed and situated, valuing all classroom members as full, whole beings with emotions, and creating co-learning environments—among several others. Additionally, they each note and reference numerous institutional and material constraints, cross-disciplinary influences, labor issues, and their own positionality. Rather than offering a simplistic and direct relationship between feminist pedagogy and their own writing assignments then, these narratives suggest the complex networks of influences and how they each negotiated those networks in praxis.

While the influences, constraints, and pedagogical aims of these women were many—indeed, more than I have the space to fully engage—there is still a sense that each of them had located a few pedagogical aims within feminism that they were using to inform their classroom and assignments. While Kay Siebler has located 16 feminist teaching practices and I located at least three generations of feminist values in Chapter 1, in order to access this rich pedagogical tradition, these women tended to emphasize a few specific feminist values that informed their teaching. In the first section, most of the teachers identified feminist pedagogy as being central

to their understanding and negotiation of self and as informing their understanding of how identity differences were constructed and influenced interactions, knowledge, etc. In the second section, the three larger feminist values that seem most prominent were epistemological understandings of knowledge and identity are constructed, valuing co-learning and holistic approaches to being, and valuing critically engaging with personal experiences. Across both sections, these reflections offer an understanding of feminism that is both flexible and rhetorical, and specifically individualized by each teacher's positionality, contexts, politics, and constraints (economic, identities, material, institutional, etc.).

While feminism is flexible and rhetorical for these teachers, this also means (as they reported) that it is also sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit, or more or less visible through classroom practices, pedagogical values, and writing assignments. All of these teachers were able to identify abstract feminist pedagogical values that were apart of their teaching philosophies and that informed their assignments or classroom practices; however, there was less certainty regarding whether or not their assignment texts forwarded their feminist pedagogical values and the feminist politics of their writing assignments. Despite having highly political feminist pedagogical values, the politics of these values and their significance for students in terms of politics was the aspect that seemed less explicit throughout the discussions. In the first half, many of the teachers connected their understanding and connection to feminist pedagogy and politics as related to their understanding of identity differences and understanding issues of identity struggles; however, the political power and investment from feminism seemed more implicit in most (not all) of the discussions of assignments and classroom moments. This less explicit understanding of the politics of

feminism and feminist pedagogy continues to suggest the flexibility of feminism, which seems to be able to be as political or not as needed. However, the politics of feminism and feminist pedagogy ultimately offers an exigency for feminism and feminist assignments; in other words, the shared goal of transforming epistemological perspectives and how students understand and engage with the world is both a pedagogical goal and rationale for teaching feminist writing assignments.

In addition, these interviews also illustrate the value of explicit reflections on the relationship between pedagogical values and writing assignments. Through the interview as a space for reflections, many of the teachers came to more clearly articulate what is explicit and implicit in their teaching and assignments, what they value pedagogically, and some of the tensions that arise for them in terms of feminism, assignment design, and enacting feminist values. I would argue that further attention to reflections on what we value in feminist teaching practices has the potential to create more ways of understanding praxis in richer, more dynamic ways.

3

A Study of Contemporary Feminist Writing Assignments: Methods & Findings

A feminist orientation to writing creates lines of deviation rather than lines of obedience. Not surprisingly, then, feminist rhetorics foreground writing as a political, imaginative act through which to reenvision reality. Feminists remind us that writing is not a transparent reproduction of what is; it is an active construction that reflects and refracts, creates and distorts, imagines and displaces. How we choose to position writing reflects larger configurations of meaning and power; in short, writing is fertile material for doing feminist rhetorical work because it establishes links between language, action, and consequences.

Laura Micciche (176)

In the epigraph, Laura Micciche reminds us of the social and political power that many influential feminist theorists and writers, like Cixous, Anzaldua, Lorde, etc., have accessed through writing. In her chapter, “Writing as Feminist Rhetorical Theory,” she goes onto argue that these same political feminist texts that we look to for theory and studying rhetoric should also be sites from which we draw powerful writing modes that can be used in our writing assignments in order to offer students a wider sense of what is possible through writing. Micciche’s argument functions on the assumption that feminist teachers can expand the writing modes and skills taught in assignments by looking to feminist rhetorical theory as inspiration.

Like Micciche, I believe that a feminist orientation to writing can create “lines of deviation” and position writing as “an active construction that reflects and refracts, creates and distorts, imagines and displaces,” and thus, is highly political. Extending Micche’s work a bit, however, I argue that the way feminist pedagogy works through assignments happens in more ways than in just the writing mode selected. Thus, using a rhetorical genre studies framework,

this chapter examines smaller, more theoretical ways that the collected feminist writing assignments invite students to engage and respond. In other words, studying the 73 assignments textually offers a look at *how* feminism gets translated into assignments and potentially shapes student writing and thinking.

Through the first two chapters, I have already examined numerous historical and some contemporary feminist-oriented²⁵ writing assignments. As the literature review of Chapter 1 suggests, while feminist composition scholarship includes writing assignments—even a few prominent sequences and full-length assignment texts—the examples still tend to be few and short, quick asides that describe classroom activities or quickly summarize writing prompts. Chapter 2 created a space for a sample of the participating contemporary teachers to self-define and explain their understandings of feminism, feminist pedagogy, and their teaching philosophy as they may or may not relate to their writing assignment texts. Through these discussions of the shared writing assignments, there is a range of ways these five teachers have connected their feminist teaching philosophy to their writing assignments—through an epistemological questioning of the world, identity and how knowledge is constructed, by valuing a variety of different identities and perspectives, and by connecting to students’ personal experiences, among other methods. These self-identified connections between pedagogy and assignments are further supported and examined in this chapter more precisely through a study of the actual texts of the entire corpus of the collected feminist-oriented writing assignments.

²⁵ Given the hesitations and complicated pedagogical explanations the teachers provided in the previous chapter, rather than assuming these assignments are certainly feminist assignments, in this chapter I refer to them instead, as “feminist-oriented” writing assignments.

More than just what they are doing, however, I'm interested in locating concretely what Micciche calls "feminist thinking" in these writing assignments (184). Although feminist thinking—or values, epistemology, or theories—is highly political, its presence in writing assignments is not for politics-sake or for indoctrinating students with feminism. As all genres, classroom and otherwise, position audiences into subjectivities and attempt to shape their thinking, the point of studying writing assignments is to be certain that we know how our writing assignments are positioning and shaping students—and ideally, that how they are doing so aligns with our individual pedagogies. More so, the hope of effectively translating feminist pedagogy into assignments is, in Micciche's terms, for the purpose of creating "lines of deviation" (the epigraph). By infusing writing assignments with feminism, the goal is to offer students new ways of thinking and being to explore and test, to challenge established norms and assumptions, to creatively locate new and generative perspectives, and often, to challenge students to action—to get engaged and be apart of change. This is the goal of refining assignments for pedagogical consistency.

In the feminist-oriented assignments studied in this chapter, I locate small moments that connect to feminist pedagogy and offer the potential to influence student thinking and engagement. Many of these moments, rather than being indoctrinating, are invitational—they offer students a new way of understanding their roles as students in the writing classroom; they offer students multiple ways of approaching a project in terms of methods, modes, or genres; and, they challenge students to critically consider how knowledge and identity are constructed in particular spaces, discourses, or images. While many of these pedagogical goals extend

beyond the scope of feminist pedagogy into the realm of good composition pedagogy²⁶, I locate them as feminist through their connections to the feminist writing assignments in scholarship (Chapter 1), the teachers' explanations of how they are feminist in interviews (Chapter 2), and through the teachers' willingness to participate in this study on feminist writing assignments.

In order to capture this "feminist thinking" more systematically, I'm drawing on Anis Bawarshi's arguments (reviewed in the Introduction) about how writing prompts as genres cue students to take up particular subjectivities, arguments and assumptions, and even ideologies. Thus, I am asking how feminist-oriented writing assignments position students in terms of subjectivities and how they orient students to feminist arguments, ideologies, and worldviews. This chapter will offer a quick summary of the entire corpus, grounded theory coding method, and feminist methodological grounding before summarizing the findings regarding subjectivities, arguments and assumptions, and ideologies. The close textual analysis of the feminist writing assignments suggests that how assignments position students through subjectivities, ideologies and feminism can either create more space for students' invention work or limit their ability to locate themselves and their interests in the assignment.

Methods

The Corpus of Writing Assignments

The IRB-approved study of contemporary feminist writing assignments relies on a corpus of writing assignments primarily collected from the 2013 Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference with some additional participants from the feminist workshop at the 2014

²⁶ I further examine the "problem" of overlap between feminist pedagogy and good composition pedagogy or practice in Chapter 5, the conclusion, as well.

Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Both the Feminisms and Rhetorics conference and the feminist workshop at CCCC are central sites for feminist teachers and researchers in rhetoric and composition. The recruitment locations were selected with the hope that participants would be likely to consider themselves a part of the feminist network and community of scholars in rhetoric and composition. The recruitment flyer and emails encouraged participation from teachers who self-identify as being a feminist teacher, using feminist pedagogy, or as having been influenced by feminist pedagogical scholarship; however, as the interviews with select participating teachers (in Chapter 2) suggest, pedagogical identifications are complicated, very individual, numerous (often spanning several scholarly areas), and thus, not easily generalizable or homogenous in the way the terms “feminist pedagogy” or “feminist teachers” imply. Despite this inherent heterogeneity, the recruitment efforts genuinely sought assignments from teachers who self-identify as feminist in some way. If a potential participant was in doubt about their relationship to feminism, I encouraged them not to submit their assignments.

The corpus includes 73 writing assignments from 26 participating teachers²⁷ and 30 different courses, including: 10 100-level courses with 28 assignments; 5 200-level courses with 13 assignments; 10 upper division courses with 18 assignments; 1 professional writing course with 4 assignments; and 4 graduate level courses with 10 assignments. The corpus also represents 20 different schools, all public and private four-year liberal arts colleges and universities. Course topics ranged from first year inquiries into literacy to upper-division feminist rhetorics or feminist theory courses to graduate seminars on rhetoric and composition.

²⁷ Four of the participating teachers submitted two different courses and their assignments for each.

While many of the courses are explicitly feminist in content, many of them are not—oriented instead to a particular writing genre or skills set, like an upper-division grant writing class or a course on sound composing. Although the number of assignments and the scope of courses and levels covered complicates the analysis and findings, this aspect of the project allows for further consideration of how feminist writing assignments are designed for diverse contexts and course purposes.

While participants were prompted to contribute a syllabus and assignment(s) of their choice, I received a wide range of responses: 21 courses represented in the corpus include both a syllabus and the participant-selected assignment handouts; 7 courses represented only include the syllabus (contributed with the explanation that the assignments were described in the syllabus); and 2 courses represented only include the assignment handouts. In the literature review in Chapter 1, I consciously considered any and all references to writing assignments, whether a short reference to an assignment, a quick in-class writing prompt, or a fully developed assignment handout. However, for the corpus of writing assignments I have not included every single assignment collected. For the 21 course contributions that included both a syllabus and assignment handouts, assuming that participants made conscious decisions about which assignment(s) to contribute, I only coded the assignments that included handouts. For the 7 courses represented in the corpus that only contributed the syllabus, I coded all of the main writing assignments that the syllabus describes. And finally, for the two courses represented that only include the assignment handouts, I coded the included assignments. Thus, the total of 73 writing assignments includes only those assignments that were coded; there were some writing assignments that were referenced in syllabi that did not get coded

either because they were not the main assignments of the course or because the participating-teacher only sent one or two of the assignment handouts while the syllabi described more.

Grounded Theory Analysis

In order to understand the contemporary writing assignments, I have conducted an adapted grounded theory coding of the texts of the 73 writing assignments. Contemporary grounded theory scholar Kathy Charmaz explains:

Stated simply, grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves. The guidelines offer a set of general principles and heuristic devices rather than formulaic rules. Thus, data form the foundation of our theory and our analysis of these data generates the concepts we construct. (2)

Coming out of Sociology and Strauss and Glaser's initial book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), grounded theory developed out of critiques of qualitative research as less rigorous, systematic, and thus, less valid. While grounded theory can be used for qualitative and quantitative research, it blends a more systematic method with a more qualitative approach to textual analysis. Grounded theory is well-suited to this study of writing assignments precisely because the emphasis is on accurate descriptions of the data that emerge from the data; thus, the end interpretations and analysis of the data, the writing assignments, develop out of a descriptive coding of, in this case, each line of text in the writing assignments. Additionally, the large number of assignments being studied requires a systematic approach to analysis for consistency.

Following Charmaz's guidelines, the coding of the corpus of writing assignments used two rounds of coding (46): the initial round of coding used a line-by-line description of the

texts, and the second focused round of coding was used to create categories that have emerged from the descriptive codes of the data. Although grounded theory is summarized as being an initial and focused single round of coding followed by a second round geared towards creating categories, each of these rounds included numerous read-throughs of the data set and codes in order to ensure that the descriptions are representative of the data and then the categories.

Coming out of Sociology, grounded theory's coding uses gerunds in order to emphasize social processes, as sociologists using grounded theory are often coding field observations in order to understand human behavior. My use of grounded theory is adapted in two ways. Instead of coding with gerunds, my line coding emphasized accurate and detailed descriptions of each line, often simply relying on the actual language of the assignment. In addition to not using gerunds, my use of grounded theory was adapted to the collection of writing assignments so as to de-emphasize many of the key features that many writing assignments might contain. In other words, precisely because the writing assignment is a disciplinary text that often contains typical sections, such as the assignment description, submission information, citation and research guidelines, unit schedules, assessment criteria, etc., I avoided coding these features precisely because I did not want them to turn into the main categories. Writing assignments naturally have these built in categories; thus, I attempt to de-emphasize these central writing assignment features in order to avoid making obvious categories. Instead of focusing on common parts of the writing assignments, my coding was directed by my larger research questions, including:

- How do contemporary writing assignments construct feminist pedagogy and feminism?

- What are the assumptions, ideologies, epistemologies, and subjectivities potentially embedded in feminist-oriented writing assignments? In Bawarshi's terms, what do feminist-oriented writing assignments cue?

Essentially, I was studying the assignments for how they work theoretically rather than how they are organized and rhetorical texts. Although this theoretical frame is in tension with the aim of traditional grounded theory, the foundation of grounded theory—that the categories and findings emerge from the data—was the primary motivation of the coding. Throughout my analysis and findings, I will use footnotes to further explain some of the in-process methods decisions, as necessary.

Feminist Methodological Grounding

While the textual analysis and coding of the writing assignments relies on grounded theory, methodologically, this analysis is grounded in the rich tradition of feminist research ethics and methodologies. Following Gesa Kirsch's advice for feminist ethnographic research, this project strives "to be accountable to something approximating completeness" in the grounded theory coding and interpretation of the corpus of writing assignments (53). As Kirsch has advocated for the significance of ethical representations and interpretations in feminist research, I have sought to keep the interpretations of writing assignments that follow accountable to both the composition research community as well as the feminist teacher participants. My interpretations thus seek to critically consider and negotiate my own interpretations of assignments alongside of and against the teachers' perspectives on their own

assignments—as they have made clear in their syllabi, assignment handouts, initial emails, and in the Chapter 2 interviews.

Methodologically then, this research project is grounded in the feminist research practice of critical reflection, or the recent re-articulation of this value by Gesa Kirsch and Jacqueline Jones Royster as strategic contemplation. Kirsch and Royster explain strategic contemplation as a research method that involves “taking the time, space, and resources to think about, through, and around our work as an important meditative dimension of scholarly productivity” (21). Strategic contemplation is a complementary methodology for grounded theory precisely because the numerous rounds of both initial and focused coding require moving between close detailed textual analysis and looking at the data set as whole. In order to accept descriptive codes and categories, strategic contemplation is required in that I have had to work through a round of coding, look at the whole data set, and step back while meditating on code and category choices. Thus, melding feminist ethical research practices with an emphasis on reflective meditation, especially in regards to my interpretations, has helped to ground the methods employed in this research project.

Feminist-Oriented Writing Assignments: Findings

The data from this study is extensive; indeed, my coding has just begun to scratch the surface of this collection of assignments and syllabi. Here, I will present a glimpse of the most interesting information gained from the coding process. Through the two rounds of coding, I came to understand these assignments in terms of three areas: the explicit feminist content, the subjectivities offered to students, and the implicit arguments, assumptions, and ideologies.

For each one of these areas, however, there are a number of categories—each with their own set of codes. Each category represents a trend within the three areas (explicit feminist content, subjectivities; arguments and ideologies), and the codes (listed in numbers) offer a sense of how many of the assignments are represented in a particular trend (or, how popular a trend is). In the sections that follow, I do not have the space to offer an in-depth analysis of every single category (trend) in each of these areas; rather, I look at a few example assignments from some of the most prominent categories in each area. Each section offers a table that summarizes the categories of each area (explicit feminist content, subjectivities, arguments and ideologies) and the number of codes contained in each category (showing the popularity of the trend). My aim is to use the categories to showcase the widest array of writing assignments, while using the writing assignments to consider the trends that emerged in the assignment prompts; thus, the examples I select and analyze were chosen for the purposes of sharing and discussing as many of the assignments in the corpus as possible.

Explicit Feminist Content

Perhaps the easiest way into a pile of 73 assignments is to start with the explicit. Thus, the first round of grounded theory coding focused on the ways that the assignments explicitly name or connect to feminist theories, practices, or ways of knowing or doing. Explicit feminist content, here, means a course inquiry, title, idea or concept that anyone might readily associate with feminism; for instance, concepts like gender and sexuality, or assignments that explicitly use some version of the word “feminism.” In the corpus, there were only 13 courses out of 30 (see Figure 1) that had course titles that emphasized content that was explicitly feminist or addressed feminist issues. Perhaps surprisingly, given many participants’ concerns over whether or not their course was feminist enough to contribute, only 27 out of 73 assignments, or 37%, had explicit feminist content. In the coding, six categories, or trends²⁸, emerged from the explicitly feminist codes (see Figure 2). The trends that emerged

Course Topics that Suggest Feminist Content

Identity, Representations, Literacy
Global Women’s Lives
Romance, Gender, Identity
Women of Color Across the African
Diaspora
Gender and Communication
Identity and Constructions of Truth via
Rhetorical Foundations
Women Rhetors
Gender Speak
Feminist Critical (rhetorical) Theory
LGBT Creative Non-Fiction
Gender and Writing
Feminist Narratives: Theory and Practice

Figure 1

are rhetorical and name how or where the writing assignment texts contain explicit feminist content. In other words, when teachers were writing statements that I coded as explicit feminist content, they were doing so in order to: offer course content or context, frame the assignment with a reference or specific concept, describe the writing task (or part of it), or to

²⁸ While the term “category” is the correct grounded theory term for the groups of similar codes, for a more readable and easily accessible chapter, I’m going to primarily be using the term “trend.” I think categories are trends, but the term “trend” is more reader friendly.

offer heuristics. The most frequent method of including feminist content was through feminist texts that were referenced²⁹.

In terms of explicit feminist content, the two largest trends after feminist texts—and the ones I’m going to explore in this section—are heuristics and descriptions of the writing tasks. As some assignments have been counted in more than one trend, many of the assignments with explicitly

Explicit Feminist Content Trends

Feminist Texts (69)
Feminist Heuristics (33)
Feminist Writing Tasks (28)
Feminist Course Content/Context (7)
Feminist Framing/References (5)

Figure 2

feminist writing tasks also contain explicitly feminist heuristics. In these two specific trends there is a lot of overlap because because writing tasks that referenced feminist content are often further developed through heuristic questions in order to help students break down and think about parts of the writing task. To summarize the findings of these two trends, the explicitly feminist content writing tasks emphasized a variety of feminist practices and skills, including: gender as a predominant analytical lens, gender and sexuality as an analytical lens that sometimes included additional identities, some attention to the relationship between competing identities, oppression, and larger power structures, the inclusion of personal experience, as well as a variety of assignments that emphasized locating a particular subject or artifact to study through a lens. In order to understand explicitly feminist writing prompts, as there is still quite a lot of variety and difference, I will consider a few example assignments that contain both feminist writing tasks and feminist heuristics.

²⁹ While the feminist texts referenced is clearly the most popular trend, because many of the prompts named several feminist texts, I am not going to take the space in this chapter to discuss these. While there were a lot of feminist texts that were referenced, there was not much, if any, overlap. See Appendix C for a complete list of all of the feminist texts referenced.

In terms of the “writing tasks” trend, a writing task predominantly includes directive sentences that give explicit directions to students about what they should do in the assignment. For example, one explicit feminist writing task is: “Analyze and evaluate your educational experiences as it intersects with gender here at University [X].”³⁰ The “heuristics” trend predominantly includes questions and/or examples of possible topics or ideas to pursue. For instance, the heuristics that followed the above directive writing task asked questions about both students’ previous textbooks and their courses, asking:

- What is the definition of gender the textbook implicitly or explicitly holds?
- Do the books use gender and sex interchangeable?
- How many genders along the gender spectrum are presented in the textbook?
- How are those genders characterized? In a typical binary fashion?
- Does the textbook retell, revise, or rework the gender binary as expressed in Chapter 5 of Gender Stories? Address this specifically.

AND

~ Classes you are taking or took, in any discipline. Consider

- Does the course material address issues of gender?
- How many genders are addressed? Evenly?
- How are those genders characterized? Honorably?
- Are the professors giving respectful recognition of gender?
- Do they use gender and sex interchangeable?
- Does the course retell, revise, or rework the gender binary as expressed in Chapter 5 of Gender Stories? Address this specifically. [sic]

In this particular assignment, gender is the main analytic being used to study students’ previous educational experiences at the specific institution at which the prompt was given. This example is indicative of the ways that most of the feminist content assignments develop: the feminist writing task was a fairly straightforward and simple directive that emphasized a specific feminist issue and then the feminist heuristic questions help students to develop a direction

³⁰ In order to maintain anonymity for participants, I have removed any identifying features from the writing prompts. Thus, in this particular prompt, I have removed the university’s name.

and a clearer understanding of the feminist issue. For this example, the heuristic questions help students to understand what analyzing gender in their educational experiences means. The questions establish that gender is a complex identity feature that is different than sex and includes a spectrum of options beyond the typical male/female binary. Even beyond opening up gender, these heuristic questions suggest that gender is often taught in a reductive binary, whether through explicit instruction or implicitly. This assignment not only emphasizes gender, but it also asks students to come to a new and more complex understanding of gender that likely conflicts with their previous educational experiences.

An emphasis on gender as a main analytic or writing task is perhaps the most obvious method for making a writing prompt feminist; indeed, the two most prominent sub-categories within the writing task trend were writing tasks that solely emphasized gender (as the example above does) and then, writing tasks that paired gender with sexuality. For instance, one prompt from a syllabus for an LGBTQ Creative Nonfiction course says:

[...] you will attend and/or participate in programs or events pertaining to lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender lives and issues *outside* the [course number] classroom. You will then document your attendance/participation through a piece of writing that includes some creative nonfiction writing generated by you from that event and some commentary in which you discuss how the event gave you some new technique or perspective to use in writing about sex and/or gender through creative nonfiction.

Unlike the above example that primarily emphasized students' gendered experiences in the writing task, this writing task distinguishes between sex and/or gender, but pairs sexuality and gender as part of the writing task itself. As this CNF prompt is from the syllabus, and thus quite short, it was only coded as having a writing task code (with no heuristic codes); however, the prompt suggests that the specific context and meaning of sexuality and gender will likely be determined based on the selected event. Similar to the gendered educational analysis

assignment above, this assignment assumes that an LGBTQ non-class event will provide students with a new perspective that will affect their writing and/or thinking about sexuality and/or gender.

The emphasis on gender in the writing prompts—which is echoed in the course titles in Figure 1—connects gender to communication practices, rhetoric, students’ educational experiences, rhetorical education, particular texts, sex and sexuality, and romantic relationships. As many feminist pedagogies and epistemologies emphasize an understanding of identity as complex and intersectional, the predominant emphasis on gender in the explicitly feminist codes may seem like a limited and outdated version of feminism; however, as noted above, most of these assignments develop the initial framework through heuristic questions and examples which help students to understand the analytic in specific ways. Thus, each assignment’s development of the key feminist analytic or issue should be individually evaluated. The pedagogical implications suggest that we should consider the specific ways that our assignment prompts develop and define feminist issues and concepts like gender and identity through questions and examples—that an assignment’s heuristics are perhaps the most important and informative aspect for explaining the feminist issues, terms, or analytics. Within the corpus, there were assignments that successfully used heuristics to develop complex understandings and a variety of possibilities for students, and there were also a few assignments that used a concept like gender in a simpler and perhaps limiting way.

There are various reasons why an assignment prompt might use a more limited and simple analytic, like solely relying on gender. Perhaps, classroom conversations and shared readings more thoroughly and complexly define and explore the concept—the assignment

prompt itself is not the only classroom discourse that students draw from in order to write.

However, as Alison Head and Michael Eisenberg found for a Project Information Literacy study about student research practices and resources, over three quarters of the students they surveyed considered “written guidelines about course related assignments [...to be] one of the most helpful materials an instructor can provide” (2010, 2; 2009, 29-30). Coupled with Bawarshi’s claims that assignments are genres that shape student thinking and writing, the assignment prompt is a text that can either foster critical and complex thinking or not. Thus, as we use explicitly feminist issues, analytics, and writing tasks, we should be critically considering the ways that assignment prompts define and explain the project and issues at stake—because students do look to assignment prompts for guidance and direction.

An example assignment that relies on gender as an analytic without much development, titled “Raising and Defending a Good Question about Gender and Rhetorical Education,” asks students to “Use one or more of the readings we have covered in unit one to help you present an *original and provocative question* about the relationship between gender and a rhetorical education” (original emphasis). The assignment is coded for both the writing task and two heuristics. The heuristics offer ideas to explore through the following questions (not placed next to each other in the assignment):

- That is, if your readers ever expect to undertake a focused exploration of rhetorical history, American history, and/or gender, what question do they need to reflect on if they hope to understand these topics in a meaningful way?
- How do our ideas about gender evolve once we see gender as a source of continual training and policing?

These are invention-based questions that are intended to provide students with a starting place for their own thinking. The first question situates gender as an influential force alongside of

rhetorical and American history. The second question offers a claim for understanding gender as a force that trains and polices. Even though the second question prompts students to see gender as evolving, the suggested evolution seems to be situated on a continuum of gender equality or oppression rather than understanding gender as a part of a complex identity matrix that is rhetorical, contextual, and varying. This particular assignment is developed and explained through two pages, and yet, the analytical lens of gender does not develop or evolve throughout the two pages. The syllabus provides some context; the assignment is for an upper division English selected topics course on “Gender and Writing.” The course description starts with Quintilian’s “good man speaking well” and emphasizes a definition of gender as social roles based on sex and “one’s performance as a man or as a woman.”

This assignment, “Raising and Defending a Good Question about Gender and Rhetorical Education,” is not the only one that offers a limited understanding of gender as a primary analytical lens—and each of them do so with their own unique context. However, the question that is raised is whether or not we should understand gender as a single identity feature. On the one hand, the assignment offers students an opportunity to critically consider a set of shared readings (not named) and write an exploratory paper that develops one good question about gender and rhetorical education: the assignment is interesting, offers numerous ways into it, and emphasizes questions as a way into researching an area. Additionally, this particular assignment connects gender with language and history, contextualizing particular events, figures, and rhetorics as constrained or supported, in part, by gender. On the other hand, however, we might hope for some additional questions that encouraged students to understand gender as one identity aspect in a complex matrix of varying and competing

identities that constrain, support, or maintain particular structures, including rhetorical education. While gender could be a theoretical concept that develops and integrates additional identities throughout the course (though the syllabus does not support this possibility), the question remains whether identities should be taught in a piece-meal way or whether a more integrated, intersectional approach to identity from the beginning of a course is best.

In contrast, many of the assignments that began with an initial writing task that started with a sole emphasis on gender, evolved their explanation of gender and identity through the use of additional ideas/examples to consider questions. For instance, a fourth project for an upper division Feminist Critical (Rhetorical) Theory class says “explore the rhetorical process of remembering women and consider the rhetorical work of memorializing women’s past” (coded as “course context”). When students are asked to select an artifact to analyze, then, the starting place is historical artifacts that memorialize women. However, through the use of questions (coded as heuristics) that push students to a more complex understanding of identity, gender becomes only one part of the analytic. The assignment explains:

Your goal for this project is to analyze this memorial artifact, considering the argument the “text” makes about the woman/women in question as well as any *other* arguments you see it making about feminism, women, and women’s rights (or lack thereof). You should also consider how issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality come into play here. In essence, the question you want to ask and answer is what does it mean to remember this woman? What are the stakes of this memorialization?

While “woman” is where the assignment starts, it situates feminism, women, and women’s rights as potentially different, and race, class, gender, and sexuality are important aspects of “woman” that a memorial artifact may or may not represent. Even though this particular assignment is simply a description on a syllabus, and thus much shorter than the “Raising and

Defending a Good Question about Gender and Rhetorical Education,” we see a more complex approach to identity and feminism being offered to students.

While these are just a few examples of assignments that included “writing task” and “heuristic” codes that were explicitly feminist, they represent two trends in the assignments with explicit feminist content: assignments that emphasize primarily gender and assignments that offer an understanding of identity as complex, varying, and influenced by various identity aspects. As a teacher, I found assignments within both of these trends equally interesting and engaging. Rhetorically, however, these examples highlight how there is a relationship between the defined short explanation of the writing task itself and how the assignment develops the writing task through heuristic questions or examples. While it’s easy to critique an assignment that only emphasizes gender, what seems more useful is understanding that heuristic questions are most useful when they help explain and refine the main analytic—in this case, gender or gender and sexuality. As we continue to develop feminist-oriented assignments, then, I’d argue for the continued need to consider what it is that our heuristic questions and examples do—what terms and ideas are they defining and elaborating on? Do they provide more spaces for students or less?

Student Subjectivities

Beyond being explicitly feminist or not, writing assignment prompts provide particular subjectivities for students—whether they suggest expected writing class subjectivities like writer, researcher, or critical thinker, or whether they offer more complex positions like

museum curator or sympathetic listener. Anis Bawarshi explains how writing assignment prompts do this:

The assumption seems to be that the student exists a priori as a writer who has only to follow the instructions of the teacher's prompt rather than as a reader who is first invoked or interpellated into the position of writer by the teacher's prompt. This process of interpellation involves a moment of tacit recognition, in which the student first becomes aware of the position assigned to him or her and is consequently moved to act out that position as a writer. (130)

Regardless of the subjectivity, students are expected to inhabit the position in order to enact the writing task required in the prompt. As Bawarshi suggests above, even the required subjectivity of "writer" is one that some students may not already inhabit. He continues, "To a great extent, students have to accept the position(s) made available to them in the prompt if they are to carry out the assignment successfully. As all genres do, the prompt invites an uptake commensurate with its ideology" (133). His point and quick examples, which are really intended primarily for theoretical purposes, hint that interpellating students into particular subjectivities through writing assignment prompts is problematic. Bawarshi is right to caution about the dangers of subjectivities precisely because not all students feel comfortable in the positions that are offered to them. When considered theoretically, we can further imagine the possibilities of very dangerous subjectivities. For a quick hypothetical example, I could imagine a writing prompt that positions students as talking to a police officer about an invented experienced crime; a potentially useful rhetorical assignment that may nonetheless force students with previous experiences with cops or as victims of violence to re-experience difficult moments—perhaps, without much just cause. This is just one hypothetical example of a subjectivity that could potentially be dangerous and harmful for students.

However, not all subjectivities are equally risky, and as Bawarshi notes, all genres to varying extents require a writer to take-up a particular subjectivity and its ideologies and assumptions; in other words, interpellating students into positions is unavoidable. Thus, as teachers constructing and teaching particular assignments, we have to critically consider the subjectivities we ask students to inhabit and for what purposes. Looking at a larger corpus of writing assignments than Bawarshi, I can confidently say that many of the feminist-oriented writing assignments I studied actually offered empowering subjectivities for students. While all writing assignment prompts—like all genres—do interpellate students into particular positions as writers, researchers, and critical thinkers, I looked more closely at the assignments that were more explicit about who students are, who they should be, and what the assignment required them to be. I'm especially interested in what subjectivities feminist-oriented writing assignments ask students to take up and what the consequences of those subjectivities might be. While some subjectivities in prompts may be potentially risky for students (as in the above hypothetical example), I think that we have yet to seriously study, and thus, evaluate the subjectivities that real writing prompts do ask students to take up. In the feminist-oriented writing assignment corpus, I found a few categories of explicit subjectivities³¹ that were offered to students (see Figure 3), including: empowering subjectivities, writing-based subjectivities, responsible to others subjectivities, novice subjectivities, subjectivities that positioned students

³¹ While every writing prompt in the collection has a subjectivity that students must be interpellated into in order to successfully take up the prompt, I focused my coding on the subjectivities that were explicitly referenced. The explicit codes were moments in writing assignments that described and explicitly named who students were, who they should be, or who or what the assignment asked them to be. Often, the explicit subjectivities occurred in assignments that contextualized the writing task and explained its value to students. By contrast, implicit subjectivities occurred in assignments that did not fully describe or explain who students were or are and why they should be taking on the particular writing task of the assignment; many of the implicit subjectivities come from assignments that do not directly address students, but rather solely emphasize the writing task (e.g., select three of the shared readings and write a response to them). I found that only 36 out of 73 writing assignments gave explicit or even suggested subjectivities for students to inhabit.

as being developed, changed, or grown, and a final category of very specific or elaborate subjectivities that were unrelated otherwise (such as sympathetic listener).

In the feminist-oriented writing assignments, subjectivities that empower students make up the largest category. These subjectivities are empowering in a very simple way: they function on the assumption that every single student has expertise and knowledge that is considered valuable. Sometimes the knowledge is developed from the assumption that students have paid attention all semester and done the coursework; for example, after a semester of studying the rhetorics of

courtship, one final assignment asks students to construct their own romantic pedagogical instruction manual because they “have critically interrogated arguments about love, representations of the rhetoric of courtship and, most

recently, forms of instruction that teach the gendered rhetoric of romantic relations” all semester—in other words, after all of that analytical work, students are ready to be the teachers and critics of the cultural rhetorics of courtship. Or, sometimes the students are positioned as simply having a perspective or voice that is valued for its own sake—for example, the “Personal Theory” assignment examined next. For an example of an empowering subjectivity, one assignment sequence for a Women’s Rhetorics course asks students to begin the semester as theorizers (in a “Personal Theory” essay), and then, for the final essay (a rhetorical analysis project) they are positioned as contributing to research on women’s

Feminist-Oriented Subjectivity Categories

Empowering Subjectivities (14)
Writing-Based Subjectivities (10)
Specific & Elaborate Subjectivities (7)
Responsible to Others Subjectivities (3)
Novice Subjectivities (2)
Developing Subjectivities (2)

Figure 3

rhetorics. The first assignment prompt starts with:

To theorize is to seek an explanation for some phenomenon by systematically collecting and studying evidence and then generalizing from that evidence. In this essay, you will be examining your own experience and/or the experience of women you know in order to theorize about how gender affects rhetoric (defined broadly by Andrea Lunsford as the art, practice, and study of all human communication).

By defining what it means to theorize and then situating theorizing as students' main task, students are essentially asked to become theorists of gender and rhetoric. It's doubtful that prior to this assignment many students had ever considered or inhabited a theorist subjectivity; however, by starting with a definition of theorizing, the assignment offers theorizing as a potentially new position for students to try out. Additionally, by emphasizing students' experiences (or the experience of women they know), students are positioned as theorizers of what is already familiar—their own experiences and the experiences of those they know. By using students' experiences as a site of knowledge, this particular assignment is reminiscent of the experience-based feminist writing prompts from the 1970s and 80s that emphasized students' coming to voice through their writing. Unlike many of the earlier historical prompts (discussed in Chapter 1), however, this prompt encourages students to theorize their experiences with some reference to the readings, which are listed as: Woolf, de Beauvoir, Rich, Lorde, Anzaldua, Cixous, Minh-ha, hooks, Mairs, and Tempest Williams.

Within this same Women's Rhetorics course, the final writing assignment is called a "Rhetorical Analysis Project" in which students are asked to locate a contemporary woman's rhetorics to study and analyze. On the one hand, this writing assignment is a fairly traditional rhetorical analysis assignment that positions students as writers, rhetorical analyzers, and as engaged with contemporary culture (at least to some extent). On the other, from the very first

sentence of the prompt, students are positioned as “contributing to our understanding of women’s rhetoric by researching a contemporary woman rhetor of your choosing.” Students are also “encouraged to think broadly about who is a rhetor and what constitutes rhetoric.” Both of these aspects of the prompt position students as knowledgeable and as conscientious choosers. While there are certainly students who may not desire to contribute to our understandings of women’s rhetorics, the text of the prompt itself is empowering precisely because it assumes that students’ rhetorical selections and analysis will be valuable, interesting, and help others to more fully understand women’s rhetorics. The underlying assumption of this positioning is that every student has valuable insight to add not only to the collective of the classroom, but also to the larger audience interested in women’s rhetorics.

Obviously, what I may call “empowering,” students may understand as difficult, more work, or even simply academic jargon. Contributing to women’s rhetorics, for instance, may sound empowering to me as an academic and simply be an academic request that students see no value or interest in; however, I would argue that the ways that a prompt positions students in relation to knowledge and expertise helps students to understand their position within the writing classroom and even what’s possible with each writing task. Some additional subjectivities that were categorized as empowering in the assignment corpus include: students positioned as prepared for college (emotionally, socially, and academically); students positioned as grant writers who were experts on their clients; students positioned as museum curators of texts—because they were experts of the texts; students positioned as experts regarding their own writing and choices as writers; students positioned as valued experts on a course; students positioned as manifesto writers with valuable insight about the future;

students positioned as being valued contributors to assessment criteria; and students positioned as contemporary romantic teachers with an eye toward cultural critique; among other similarly empowering subjectivities. Even if students do not believe that they have valuable knowledge or insight, I think asking them to inhabit a position of knowledge and insight is useful, potentially empowering, and it might even invite them to reconsider their thinking about their sense of their own capabilities.

Another example of an assignment prompt that contains empowering and writing-based subjectivities (the second subjectivities trend) comes from a final project for a graduate level course called “Feminist Narratives: Theory and Practice.” The syllabus explains that for the final project, course participants will: “complete[] a substantial and significant piece of writing that integrates the theory and practice of feminist narratives in the context of her/his/hir ongoing scholarly work.” But then to elaborate on this, a final page attached to the end of the syllabus and schedule says:

By class consensus, we decided that the end-of-semester project would be a piece of text or digital writing that:

- 1) used narrative and narrative techniques in some significant way
- 2) addressed issues of gender in some significant way
- 3) consciously engaged with gender and narrative in the context of hegemonic power relations, either through the content of the writing and/or through its form and language
- 4) consciously wrestled with narrative and gender as existing and overlapping with some multiple realities and intersectional identities—which could include but are not limited to sexuality, class, race/nation/ethnicity, religion, dis/ability, language of origin, colonization, imperialism, capitalism, etc.

This end-of-semester writing must be work that grows out of the semester of writing done for [this course], and can certainly be woven from writing exercises accomplished for the class. There is no required length. Do the work you need to do to be serious and questioning.

Whatever semester writings are used, in this end-of-semester project these should also

be consciously arranged, elaborated upon, and revised into a coherent (but necessarily in-process) whole. All of this work should be done with an eye and ear to exploration of one or more of the “burning question(s)” that have occupied you during the semester.

The assignment’s opening line, which establishes that the text of the assignment was developed as a result of a classroom discussion regarding goals and interests, positions students and the professor as a collective body with the power to make decisions not only about individual writing goals, but also the purpose, context, direction, and requirements of classroom assignments. This first line was categorized as an empowering subjectivity precisely because students are positioned alongside of the professor as having control over major classroom decisions and assignments; students are very literally given power and agency in the classroom. The last sentences of the last two paragraphs were each categorized as writing-based subjectivities, though they also certainly overlap with the empowering category, too. In those, students are positioned as being serious and questioning thinkers and writers who are in control of their writing enough to know how long a final project needs to be in order to be successful. Similarly, the last sentence positions students as having been intellectual and perhaps emotionally motivated by a “burning question” throughout the entire semester. While there is definitely overlap between these three subjectivity codes, the main subjectivity that students are offered is one of control over their writing and as being part of a larger collective that is in control of classroom assignments; students are empowered to understand themselves as thoughtful writers and as thoughtful classroom decision makers. In feminist composition scholarship, some feminist teachers have discussed ways to give students control over the curriculum and their learning in order to make the classroom a space where everyone contributes to knowledge and learning. This example assignment might remind teachers of the

power to name students as contributors to classroom assignments and aims within the actual text of the writing prompt. Additionally, by naming this assignment as the result of a class consensus, the assignment prompt holds students responsible for the requirements and guidelines precisely because they created them.

Many of the empowering subjectivities position students as experts or particularly knowledgeable; however, this points to the fact that critical thinking—indeed, any of the writing skills or tasks we ask students to do in prompts—may actually be brand new for students. How do we position students in writing assignments that tackle new topics and skills? Two of the assignments coded for explicit subjectivities positioned students as novices³². Traditionally, we might consider the role of the novice as inherently a disempowered position precisely because novices lack experience and knowledge by definition; however, neither of these examples are disempowering because of how the novice subjectivity is contextualized and explained. In one example, on a special topics course on the “Rhetorics of Failure,” students are asked to become novices of anything they like for the purposes of failing, trying again, and then writing a critical novice narrative of their experiences. In this example, students are literally novices for the purpose of failing; we might rightly ask, what could be more disempowering?! The full (from the syllabus) text of the assignment reads as follows:

For this project, you will embark on a weeks-long adventure to learn or achieve something you’ve always wanted to do but have never attempted: juggling, riding a unicycle, playing a song on an instrument, translating a passage of writing from one language to another, making a short film, writing a play, or something else. Whatever you choose to attempt, it should be significantly difficult that you will expect to experience failure in the process. In other words, the object here is not to succeed, but

³² “Novices” is a category of subjectivities; however, the two novice subjectivities are also empowering. While there is cross-over between these two categories, these two novice subjectivities were not counted in the number of “Empowering Subjectivities” codes. While my analysis explores connections and trends across categories, none of the codes were double-counted, primarily for clarity’s sake.

to try, fail, and try again. You should meticulously document your process with a journal, blog, vlog, or other record of progress, recording not only your strategies for learning, but also your feelings and thoughts about difficulty and failure. Your final submission should also include a reflection on the process as a whole, drawing on course discussions and readings, so that the final submission demonstrates creative, personal, and critical engagement with important course concepts.

While being a novice who fails doesn't sound all that empowering, this assignment positions failure as something that is part of the process of learning to do new and challenging activities. The scope of the activities listed suggests that failure is part of a vast array of life experiences and activities that we might expect most people to experience and attempt at some point in their lives. The assignment suggests that part of this process is "feelings and thoughts about difficulty and failure"; in other words, students can expect that failing involves an emotional response and thinking about the struggle itself; however, the assignment positions all students as having to tackle a new-to-them activity and failing not because of any inherent-to-them reason, but because failure is simply a necessary part of trying new things. This basic assumption of this assignment suggests that rather than disempowering students (by asking them to fail), students are asked to understand failure in a more complex and different way than they might have previously. In fact, the assignment suggests that although we may think of failure as disempowering, if we study it as a necessary part of the process, it may no longer be disempowering. For this particular final project (the "Novice Narrative"), students were allowed to choose between this option and two other options, which provides even more room for students who may not be as adventurous to find subjectivities that are more fitting and more likely to lead to their ability to successfully complete the final project.

As the above examples show, even though there were six trends that represent a large variety of subjectivities, many of the examples overlapped with the empowering category.

Trends (or categories) for subjectivities were created based on similarities in the codes; thus, if there were specific similarities—like novice subjectivities or developing subjectivities—then more specific trends (categories) were created. Thus, despite the specific trends named, empowerment was a trend that most of the subjectivities shared. This emphasis on empowering subjectivities is consistent with many of the feminist writing assignments found in feminist composition scholarship, too. That is not to say that empowering subjectivities can only be found in feminist writing assignments; however, as is evident in Chapter 1 and the contemporary collection, feminist writing assignments tend to carefully situate subjectivities that empower students through valuing their experiences, knowledges, identities, and perspectives.

The above examples of assignment subjectivities also illustrate that subjectivities that are offered to students in writing prompts are understood within the context of the assumptions and arguments that each assignment makes. For instance, the “novice who fails” subjectivity can only be understood within the larger arguments that the assignment makes about failure—that failing is natural, necessary, a part of the process of learning, and something that everyone experiences differently. For another example, the above examined “Personal Theory” essay positions students as theorists and the larger argument that the assignment makes is that students’ experiences with gender can be the impetus for new understandings of gender and rhetoric. While I have separated subjectivities and arguments and ideologies into two larger theoretical areas of emphasis in this study of feminist-oriented assignments, I am simultaneously hoping that my analysis suggests and explains the direct relationship between the two.

Constructing Knowledge & Identity in Feminist-Oriented Writing Assignments

In the feminist-oriented writing assignments, four broad trends emerged in regards to implied arguments and ideologies: there were epistemological arguments, identity-based arguments, arguments for connecting theory to personal experiences, and arguments for and about social action (Figure 4). The two largest trends are arguments about epistemology and identity. “Arguments about epistemology” means statements that make or imply particular arguments about how knowledge is constructed and situated. In fact, all of the

epistemologically categorized assignments oriented students to understand meaning as constructed—socially, culturally, and materially and also as situated with a specific historical time period and context. While not all of the assignments offered that full explanation of meaning as being constructed and situated, many of them did offer their own complex way of explaining how a particular set of meanings or

knowledges come into existence. There is much more coherence across the epistemological arguments than there is across the assignments with arguments about identity. The arguments about identity are far more assignment specific and bring a variety of aspects about identity into a specific context. Some of these same assignments were examined under the analysis above for explicit feminist content. Thus, identity issues like gender, race, class, sexuality, nation, etc. not only suggest explicit feminist content, but they also suggest larger arguments

Assignment Arguments & Ideologies

Epistemological (27)
Identity (26)
Connecting Theory to Personal
Experiences (8)
Social Action (5)

**Numbers are the number of assignments in each category, not the number of individual codes (as with figures 2-3). There are 45 assignments with argument and ideology codes.*

Figure 4

about identity. While there are 27 assignments with epistemological codes and 26 assignments with identity codes, 12 of those assignments overlap, or are coded as having both epistemological arguments and identity-based arguments. This overlap, though, is not surprising considering many of the identity-based assignments reviewed in the history of feminist writing assignments (Chapter 1). As a central feminist interest, issues of identity are often coupled with a desire to understand how a particular identity is constructed in specific contexts, or the ways identities are affected by historic, economic, social, material, and cultural issues. Thus, the 12 assignments with both epistemological and identity codes have a firm academic genealogy in feminist rhetoric and composition.

One of the contributed first year writing courses has an assignment sequence that captures the epistemological arguments and some identity arguments, too. While only the assignments were contributed for this course, the assignments suggest that this college writing class emphasizes an inquiry into identity, representations, and literacy. This course inquiry and the assignments are a useful example of how a feminist teacher might bring feminist theories and arguments into a first year writing course without overwhelming the curriculum with a feminist-heavy agenda. The sequence of assignments begins with a representations assignment sequence, then an autobiography that is essentially a literacy narrative, and then a literacy biography, going onto conclude with a final writing process reflection and course portfolio. Both the autobiography and biography contain epistemological arguments about how students' understandings of literacy develop and the first assignment, the representations sequence, contains arguments about both the construction of knowledge and identity. The following are excerpts from the Autobiography assignment:

Writing is always an act of interpretation, construction, and meaning making. Even when writers appear to be making statements of fact no one would disagree with, the written words the writer constructs into sentences are ones which are filtered through her own unique way of putting things. No two people see everything exactly the same; no two people write exactly the same thing even when they are writing about the same event or theme.

Seeing writing as always an interpretive act means understanding how and when you as a writer enter the writing.

Significance is one of the hallmarks of academic writing – what do you think it means? What is the significance?

This assignment asks that you pause to think about where and when and how literacy enters into your life. What early or significant memories do you have about literacy? Why do those memories remain? What was significant about them, or how do you carry the lessons you learned in those instances with you today? This assignment asks that you contemplate and sift back through your memories to think carefully (as in "with care," slowly and deliberately) about the ways your early interactions with literacy might have affected your later (current) relationships with literacies.

The autobiography should begin with and be grounded in your current or past experiences with literacy (use specific examples). Successful literacy autobiographies focus on some aspect or experience rather than trying to cover your entire life's experience with literacy thus far. In this way, the assignment gives you practice in figuring out your topic and narrowing it down to a manageable focus that can be developed in meaningful detail. Use the attached heuristic to help you focus on an interesting aspect of your literacy experiences.

[Some cut after the above. Below are some questions from an included "literacy autobiography heuristic."]

Recall your earliest experiences with literacy, literate activities, literate behaviors.

- where do you remember seeing people reading and writing?
- what did your parents and older siblings read? write?
- what do you remember about learning how to read and write? who taught you? what feelings did you have about it?
- was reading and writing different for you in school than it was outside school?
- list the kinds of literacy activities school involved
- list the kinds of literacy activities you were experienced outside school
- what role has visual communication played in your life?
- how do the visual and verbal work together to communicate meaning?
- what does it mean to be literate?

- whom do you identify as being most technologically literate in your life?
- do you think there are social consequences or potential impacts on your lifestyle that depend on your literate capabilities?
- how do you expect to deal with new literacies in the future?
- what advantages and problems do you see with the way you approach technology?

The opening paragraph of this autobiography assignment starts by very explicitly explaining that writing itself is a construction. The writer is explained as having a unique perspective on the world as well as a specifically individual way of writing—and this individualism is explained as the reason that “writing is always an act of interpretation, construction, and meaning making.” The assignment is, thus, arguing that students’ own understanding of literacy is being constructed by their individual and specific set of experiences with literacy. This argument is also captured in the heuristic questions, which emphasize how specific literate experiences are situated by place (school, home), people (siblings, family, teachers), technologies, and the affordances of literacies.

In Bawarshi’s example of a literacy narrative assignment, he suggested that the underlying argument that students must adopt to be successful is often that literacy is empowering. This particular literacy narrative assignment seems to almost consciously not define literacy for students in a way that positions literacy as empowering. In the heuristic questions, for example, there are no adjectives that qualify; students are not prompted to consider both positive and negative experiences, rather they are simply directed to specific contexts in which they may have experiences with literacy. The assignment’s argument is that literacy is individually defined and each person’s definition is constructed by their specific history of literate experiences, which are directly connected to specific people, places,

institutions, technologies, and moments. On the one hand, this is an argument about literacy. But it is also an orientation to understanding how we make sense of particular things in life, here—literacy. While the first sentence of this assignment prompt offers the theoretical explanation, most of this assignment focuses on more concrete language that situates literacy as related to specific contexts—a choice, perhaps, based on the course level (first year writing); nonetheless, this orientation to individual experiences and histories as constructing knowledge is still the underlying orientation.

The literacy biography—the third writing assignment in this course sequence—builds on this epistemological theoretical base. I will not share the entire assignment, but the biography is a primary research project in which students are required to study another person’s literacy and experiences with literacy. In the assignment prompt, the following questions continue to help develop the epistemological framing of literacy:

- what is literacy in 2004?
- what skills are required to be a literate citizen?
- what does being literate involve?
- what is the role of the visual in literate understandings and practices?
- how do the visual and verbal work together to communicate meaning?
- what is the relationship between literate behavior in academic and in every day life?
- what forms does literacy take in people’s everyday lives?

While some of these questions are very similar to the autobiography’s heuristics, literacy is more specifically situated within time, nation, and various purposes (academic versus everyday life). In addition to the specific heuristic questions here, the course’s trajectory that moves from studying students’ individual literate experiences to the experiences of another person is another way of emphasizing how literacy is a concept that is constructed differently by

different experiences, historical contexts, connections with national agendas and education, and academic and everyday life experiences. Both of these inquiries into literacy—the autobiography and biography—make an evolving argument about the nature of knowledge, especially knowledge about literacy.

While these two particular assignments very explicitly make this epistemological argument, other assignments made similar ones according to their content and course level. With increasing course levels, the theoretical explanations of the construction of knowledge become more obvious and advanced. For example, many of the upper division courses with more explicit content (many reviewed in earlier sections) use language that more explicitly argues that a particular subject of study is constructed through specific cultural and social scripts, while also being situated within specific historic context and material and economic constraints.

In addition to the epistemological orientation to the construction of knowledge, there were 26 assignments that made arguments about identity. One really engaging writing assignment that makes an epistemological argument as well as one for identity is actually the first assignment from the above sequence of literacy assignments. This assignment, called the “Representations Assignment Sequence,” is actually a set of smaller writing tasks that require students to consider how they are representing themselves through various means. The assignment says (an excerpt):

Identity is a process of construction. Identity is a process of communication in which we write ourselves (figuratively) and literally (using words and writing technologies). Identity as a process of communication and writing almost always involves the entwined modes of visual and verbal. In this assignment sequence, writers focus on the interplay of the visual and the verbal in the communicative act by constructing and communicating a representation of themselves to their classmates. How do we choose

the details that communicate our meaning? How do those details represent meaning? How do visual and verbal work together to communicate meaning?

In this assignment sequence, you will:

- free write about writing: what do you think it involves? What is important in writing? How do people use writing?
- select three objects which communicate something about you as a person and as a writer. Before you share these with the class, write a 300 word reflection on what these objects represent about you and what you want to communicate through them. Consider the questions for the assignment sequence as a whole: What details can you share to communicate something significant about you?
- select a piece of music that communicates something about yourself; write a 300 word reflection on what the music communicates about you and how it does this.
- write a 1000 word reflection on the process of representing yourself without words. Some prompts to get you thinking about the process of representing yourself without words:
 - What did you want to communicate about yourself through your objects / music?
 - What do the objects / music tell your audience that is significant or distinct about you?
 - Is it easier or more difficult to communicate significance through discrete objects?
 - Can you describe the process of describing the significance of an inanimate object or piece of music?

This assignment theoretically connects identity to how we construct meaning and represent ourselves, verbally and visually. Like the two literacy assignments above, the emphasis on how communicating and understanding communications are both a process of constructing meaning is very explicit. Indeed, the introduction paragraph to the writing tasks that theoretically states identity is a construction seems like information that might take a first year writing class a few discussions to grapple with the epistemological argument. Identity, here, is more vague; however, the actual writing tasks suggest that the concept of identity is meant to be understood as the complexity of who students understand themselves to be as individuals. Aside from the opening statement, one argument this assignment might offer students is that

while the construction of the self and meaning is complex and difficult, they have some control over their construction of self through choices they make about music and things. In the assignment, students have some control over their literal choices of objects and music; however, the assumption of this assignment might be that students make these choices regarding self-representation on a daily basis through clothing, accessories, objects they carry around or not, music they listen to, things they read, etc. While the explanation of identity seems to mainly point to their individuality and personhood, within the context of a classroom of shared projects this understanding of identity could greatly be complicated and enhanced. In that same context, we might understand this assignment as also making a suggestion to students regarding how they interpret other students' choices regarding objects and music—the process of the assignment itself might encourage students to understand the complexity of self-representations and thus, to perhaps more kindly interpret and understand other students' self-representations.

I find the above representations sequence an interesting first year writing assignment precisely because it seems to draw so concretely from the history of feminist writing assignments and feminist composition and rhetoric interests: indeed, feminist rhetoricians have been invested in issues of representations as they relate to identity since the early to mid 1990s—as a rhetorical and methodological concern. In fact, this representations assignment sequence seems to take those central feminist interests and usefully place them in the context of a first year writing course without over emphasizing their feminist origin. However, many of the identity based arguments that most assignments made in the corpus were more regarding how to understand identity as an analytic. For example, in a 100 level English class called

“Introduction to Narrative,” one fairly traditional 5-page literary analysis assignment used the following heuristic questions in order to position identity issues as an interesting analytic for reading one of the course texts (excerpt):

You could also use the guiding questions of this class in order to think about what to analyze, although you can choose to focus your paper outside of the following questions: How does the text represent difference – that is, different cultures, genders, classes, nationalities, sexualities, etc. How does the text represent power? How does the text address larger societal problems or injustices? How does the text help us to understand, define, or reassess difference? How does the text affirm or problematize societal norms and/or roles? How are relationships between groups of people depicted (i.e. men and women, different social groups, different ethnicities, etc)? How might technological advancements complicate our understanding of difference?

The basic argument that these questions make is that how a text represents identity, differences, power dynamics, and social norms is important—that these are worthy issues to study and pay attention to in all texts. While students are allowed to interpret the selected text in any manner of their choosing, the assignment encourages them to consider issues of identity and power simply through only offering these questions. The questions and interests become a lens through which students can approach the text.

Feminist-oriented writing assignments that make epistemological and identity-based arguments were the most common—each category individually, but they were also the most common overlapping arguments. However, the other two arguments—for connecting theory to personal experiences and for and about social action—are also interesting feminist-oriented assignment findings that draw from feminist rhetoric and composition’s rich history. The assignments that make an argument for connecting theory to personal experiences usually literally ask students to interpret a particular theory by analyzing their own experiences through it. In some ways, this is also a specific epistemological claim—that personal

experiences are a valuable source of knowledge and should ground and check all of our theories. This is a feminist theory that is prominent throughout all eras of the history of the literature—as is evident by the review of feminist teachers’ commitment to journal writing assignments (most prominent in the 70s, but still lingering in scholarship in the 90s; see Chapter 1). This feminist argument also recalls Adrienne Rich’s famous metaphor of understanding theory as “the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the trees,” and her argument to “get back to the earth” by understanding theory in terms of specific bodies (not just the abstract theoretical “the body”) (31-32). While there were only 8 assignments that made arguments for connecting theory to personal experiences, those assignments were across all course levels—first year writing, upper-division courses, and graduate courses.

An example of a 100 level writing course assignment that emphasizes connections between theory and personal experiences is a “This I Believe” essay that is focused on education. The main explanation of the assignment (excerpted) is as follows:

The texts we are reading during these first two weeks of class focus on different philosophies of education that encourage us to think critically about why education is valuable, what education contributes to society, how power influences the kind of education people receive, and how, as students, education can and does enrich our lives. For your first essay assignment, you will write a brief essay in which you begin to articulate your own educational philosophy.

Education philosophy, in this context, means the core values and beliefs that guide the way that you think about education. As you brainstorm ideas for your essay, you might want to consider some of the following questions: What do you think is the most pressing issue in education right now? How have your own experiences in school shaped how you feel about education? How has your family’s experience with school influenced your feelings about education? What factors are the most important for an excellent education? What purposes should education serve? Where do you hope education will take you in your life? What have been some of the most memorable school experiences you’ve had and how have they shaped your life?

[Cut: guidelines for “This I Believe” essays from NPR website and a brief contextual note about the genre]

Your essay might be influenced by one of our class texts, and you should feel free to cite one or more of those texts if you wish. But remember that the focus of this essay should be on your experiences and your beliefs. Keep the “Be Brief” guideline in mind, but don’t stress out too much about the exact length. Your essay can be as long or as short as it needs to be to tell your story and articulate your belief.

This is an interesting example of the assignments that connect theory to experiences precisely because the assignment does not explicitly use that language—of connecting the readings to students’ personal experience. However, the context of the writing assignment is that students would have been reading a variety of critical perspectives and analyses of various educational issues for two weeks while discussing these texts in class and writing about them in their journal (another course assignment that asked students to connect theory to experience). The assumption, then, is that students should articulate their own educational theory that should be based in their own personal experiences, but that might also have been shaped and/or refined through the readings and discussions. The last paragraph starts with a more precise offering of the readings to students by saying, “Your essay might be influenced by one of our class texts, and you should feel free to cite one or more of those texts if you wish.” The option to directly refer to the texts is like an open invitation to students in this assignment. This option, along with the open page length, situate students as being thoughtful writers who make informed decisions about their writing based on their thinking about the subject at hand (what I might call a subtle, empowered-writer subjectivity). The larger argument of this assignment, though, is that students’ beliefs about education may be shaped and revised, in part, through some readings and class discussions, but ultimately they are primarily influenced through their

previous educational experiences along side of their family's experiences with education and other experiential contexts. Again, this argument is an epistemological argument for the significance of previous educational experiences as influencing present beliefs; however, the class's readings and emphasis on education—even though it is merely an invitation—are likely to be partly generative for students' thinking.

Another assignment that makes arguments for connecting theory to personal experiences as well as an identity-based argument is from a graduate level research seminar in rhetoric and composition. The course's syllabus situates the course as an investigation into the genres and rhetorics of scholarly writing in rhetoric and composition in order to help orient students to their own scholarly writing. The first course writing assignment, called an "Individual Reflection on Scholarship and Disciplinarity," in its entirety is as follows:

1. What is your academic genealogy? According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, disciplinary and academic genealogies are inflected with markers of intersectional identity (race, class, gender, sexuality). How does your own identity graft onto, mingle with, or forward your intellectual choices and work? How has it helped you to choose your disciplinary ties? (This question is designed to help you find the connections between who you are and what you do. According to many feminist scholars (and some comp/rhet scholars, too) these foundational concepts of our identity influence what we choose to pursue in our scholarship and teaching.)
2. Chart your theoretical (as in strands of theory, not make believe) influences by creating a disciplinary family tree. Who is your "father" (with all the good/bad that entails); who is your "wacky aunt" (who you get only some key ideas from, but leave the primary parts of their ideas behind)? In other words, find a way to graphically map your own engagement with the discipline of Rhetoric and composition through the idea of it being one big ole family (imagine the holiday dinners, whoa)!

Like the previous educational philosophy assignment, this reflection does not use the explicit language of connecting theory to writing—which is present in some of the other assignments that argue for connecting theory to personal experiences and in the feminist writing

assignments in the history of feminist composition scholarship. Nonetheless, the first part of the assignment asks students to understand Mohanty's theory of the relationship between intersectionality and disciplinarity in the context of their own experiences. The assignment's main emphasis is really an identity-based argument—Chandra Talpade Mohanty's argument that disciplinarity and academic genealogies are influenced by individual scholars' intersectional identities. While the emphasis on identity means the questions are framed in terms of how identity has shaped academic interests, I believe that intersectional identity and how students engage with the concept of identity inherently include students' personal experiences. In other words, in order for students to talk about how their sexuality, gender, race, nation, ability, etc. all contribute to their academic research interests and choices, they would inevitably have to reference central experiences which reified or conflicted with their identities in ways that were motivating and generative to their thinking. Again, this assignment is not the most explicit argument for connecting theory to personal experiences; however, it suggests that this theme can be present throughout a number of assignments in a variety of ways.

The second part of the reflective assignment is potentially less about students' personal experiences; however, I find it to be a pretty interesting extension of the first part of the question and certainly an explicit continuation of Mohanty's argument about academic genealogies. Even though the emphasis isn't what we might traditionally understand as personal experiences, as students begin to professionalize within an academic discipline and a graduate program, their research interests are certainly personal and might even start to claim (in a theoretical way) the space that we might traditionally relegate to personal experiences. More than just connecting to personal experiences, though, this second question suggests

accountability in a subtle way—which is an important aspect of Mohanty’s arguments about knowing our own academic genealogies. By asking students to think of their academic genealogy as a family in ways that directly align students with the theorists and disciplines they are drawing from, the assignment is suggesting that these alignments are not neutral and have significant meaning. Additionally, both of these assignment questions are metatext assignments—popular by feminist composition scholars in the 1990s through the 2000s. They both ask students to critically reflect on how and why they have come to their current location in terms of academic interests and disciplinary ties.

The final and smallest set of arguments in the feminist-oriented writing assignments—though certainly not the least interesting or relevant!—are for and about social action. Feminist rhetoric and composition have a long history of research and activism that are oriented toward social justice issues. The literature review reminds us that the 1990s emphasis on deconstructing power structures was often primarily directed toward transforming inequalities and oppressive structures in the world. Indeed, in her forward to *Feminism and Composition*, Gail Hawisher has remarked that feminist composition research demonstrates “a commitment to classroom practice as a site of activism” (xvii). In these writing assignments, the arguments for social action are assignment specific: some of them make arguments regarding students’ responsibilities for social action to the community, and then some make arguments about the relationships between research and writing and students’ potential for social action.

One example of a writing assignment that argues for social action comes from a 200 level intermediate service learning writing course on “Literacies and Place: Personal, Professional, and Communal.” The assignment is a “Service Learning Reflection Essay” that asks

students to reflect on their understandings of literacy and social action through their experiences working with a community partner. The beginning of the assignment (which cuts the learning objectives, readings, and basic requirements) is as follows:

This essay provides an opportunity to reflect on your relationship with the community agency you partnered with, and on your role as a citizen. You will extend your analysis of the agency's rhetorical situation [the first essay] by reflecting on audience, relationships, context, and constraints; you will also reflect on how various stakeholders address this rhetorical situation. You should also include your in-depth observations of the agency's literacy practices. With this essay you will practice critical reflection, another feminist practice, as well as reciprocity by sharing your essay with the agency.

Reflections on Self as Citizen

Consider how your thinking about social action (or on one particular aspect of social action) has changed as a result of participating in community service connected to your service this semester. When developing the essay, draw on your own experiences as well as course readings.

Reflecting on Community Partnership

Think about the state of and future of your relationship with your community partner. Will you end it here? Will you continue some kind of connection? Do you expect to devote further energy to community action? How and why (or why not)? Given what you have learned and experienced, where do you want to go from here?

Course Questions Addressed

How are literacies shaped by material and cultural aspects of a place?

How do ideas and practices of place and literacy intersect with practices of rhetoric, especially aspects of agency, purpose, audience, context, and genre and mode?

What are the literacies found in locations of local and global communities?

What are your responsibilities as a community member to the people and places around you? What are their responsibilities to you?

This reflection essay really makes several arguments. I think the most prominent argument, though, is that students are citizens who have responsibilities to social action within their local communities. In the opening paragraph, the base argument is simply that students are citizens who have worked with a specific community partner for a semester. Students are immediately positioned as responsible to the community partner: by asking students to share their critical

reflections as an act of reciprocity with their community partners, this assignment positions students as having obligations to the community partner. Additionally, in the heuristic questions under “Reflecting on Community Partnership” and “Course Questions Addressed,” there are assumptions that community service and social action are social responsibilities for citizens/students. The questions under “Reflecting on Community Partnership” seem to actually strive to make students accountable for future social action within the community. While students may technically have the option to claim to not want to do any additional community service, the framing of the questions make that a difficult and potentially defiant response.

Another example of a social action oriented assignment is a Manifesto from a graduate course called “Rhetoric II” that the syllabus description explains as focused on the revisions to central rhetorical concepts that contemporary rhetorical scholarship has brought about. This short assignment description is from the syllabus and shared here in its entirety:

8-10 page manifesto about some aspect of contemporary rhetorical studies, as represented in our readings. To guide us, we’ll use Bruno Latour’s explanation of manifesto in “An Attempt at a ‘Compositionist Manifesto’.” He makes a distinction between avant-garde manifestos of the 70’s — a genre of “utopian progressivism” (Puchner) directed toward rupture, intervention, and revolutionary change — and a revised model contingent on “a subtle but radical transformation in the definition of what it means to progress, that is, to process forward and meet new prospects” (473). For our purposes, a manifesto is a critical examination of a problem followed by a future-oriented, passionate exploration of an alternative way forward. Your manifesto can integrate creative and critical writing as well as a range of stylistic techniques (Haraway’s essay, which we’ll read early on, is one example). See this call for manifestos in Kairos for more context on manifestos as a genre. (50%)

While this manifesto assignment is less explicit in its call for social action, it directs students to understand themselves as engaged with the direction and movement of contemporary rhetorical studies. On the one hand, with the exception of the word “passionate,” the

description of the assignment as—“ a manifesto is a critical examination of a problem followed by a future-oriented, passionate exploration of an alternative way forward”—suggests that the assignment could be a fairly traditional research paper that locates a problem or gap and then makes a case for how to respond to it. On the other hand, the framing of the assignment as a manifesto that directs students towards Latour’s redefining of progress seems to emphasize students’ potential ability to use writing as a means of social action within rhetorical studies—to redirect, redefine, and re-imagine new futures and outcomes for rhetorical studies.

These examples of assignments that make arguments for social action represent a feminist investment in activism and social justice. While activism and social justice are actually the roots of feminism as a political movement, this is certainly a smaller trend in this study of feminist-oriented writing assignments. However, within this set of arguments for social action and even in some of the assignments not categorized as social action, there is also a trend towards holding students responsible or accountable to a variety of things—here, to their communities and the future of rhetorical studies. This same trend of accountability is a subtler assumption that was also in the above graduate assignment that used Mohanty’s arguments about academic genealogies. Again, although this is certainly a smaller trend that runs through some of these assignments, I still see it as related to the longstanding tradition of feminist activism and feminist investments in social justice issues.

Conclusion

Throughout this corpus of feminist-oriented writing assignments, I found a variety of trends that are connected to various strands of thinking throughout the eras of feminist

rhetoric and composition scholarship. Looking specifically at how assignments are explicitly feminist, how they position students, and how they carry arguments or implied assumptions offers a nuanced, theoretical, and textual means of understanding how feminist pedagogy is (or is not) visible in the assignments—and, a glimpse at how assignments that visibly reflect feminist pedagogy might shape student engagement and writing.

The assignments that used explicit feminist content did so by emphasizing gender as a predominant analytical lens, gender and sexuality as an analytical lens that sometimes included additional identities, some attention to the relationship between competing identities, oppression, and larger power structures, and the inclusion of personal experience. These analytical lenses or references to explicit feminist content were made through course titles, the use of feminist texts, heuristic questions, the writing task, descriptions of course content or context, and through framing references. While the writing assignments surveyed suggest that how we represent these identity-based issues and terms in the writing assignments varies, we should critically consider how we are constructing feminism in assignment texts because the feminist concepts, ideas and theories can be presented in ways that are simplistic and limiting or open up terms and complicate ideas in ways that foster greater critical thinking.

In terms of subjectivities, the feminist-oriented writing assignments most often tried to position students as empowered, as having knowledge, ideas, experiences and contributions that are valuable. Ideally, further research that asks students how they understand empowering subjectivities would be useful and potentially complicate this textual-based study. However, in the mean time, I believe that the analysis of subjectivities most clearly points to a continued need to consider how we can best position students in the text of writing prompts.

While many of the assignments did position students as empowered, of the two example assignments that seemed most exciting—one positioned students as part of a classroom consensus with a voice in classroom assignments and requirements, and the other positioned students as novices who were empowered through the re-defining of a familiar concept (failure). The analysis suggests that even though many subjectivities currently used are empowering, there are potentially more and less effective ways to set up these positions in ways that invite students to engage and critically reconsider a subject or their roles as students.

And finally, feminist-oriented writing assignments in this collection have made arguments about the construction of knowledge, how identity works, for connecting theory to personal experiences, and for and about social action. Understanding these underlying arguments, assumptions, and ideologies is important precisely because they orient students in particular ways toward specific subjects—including feminism, writing, and their role as students and people in the world. In other words, the assumptions and arguments an assignment text makes have the power to influence student thinking, how they approach and engage with a writing assignment, how they understand the topic, and what they think is possible.

Rhetorically, the above analysis also suggested a few key points for consideration in the construction of writing prompts. First, the most developed writing prompts connect the writing task explanation to a set of heuristic questions that helped to explain and open up some of the assignment's key terms and ideas. For this reason, I would argue that the heuristic questions in writing prompts have the possibility to be one of the most useful places for invention for students. The heuristic questions have the possibility of opening up terms, complicating concepts, and providing a variety of ways for students to access a particular writing task. The

ways that heuristic questions invite students to engage with a particular topic are important precisely because they can either constrain thinking and engagement or foster new directions and possibilities.

Second, the subjectivities given for students to take up in assignments are directly related to the arguments and ideologies of the assignment. As we consider the assignments that we ask students to engage with, then, I would argue for a critical assessment of the basic assumptions and arguments being made and how the writing task itself positions students. Although this analysis did not suggest that there are any problems with how current teachers are doing this, understanding an assignment's positioning of students in relation to its arguments can be a useful way of self-reflecting on assignments for the purpose of building more pedagogically-motivated and invitational assignments. This layer of self-reflection on assignments is a second-round in assignment design, a fine-tuning of assignments that has the potential to build assignments that are more inclusive for a wider array of students, that promote a wider array of knowledges valued and drawn from, and that challenge students to a wider or different perspective on the topic at hand.

Aside from the explicit feminist content and emphasis on identity, many of these findings are not solely the realm of feminist pedagogy. Attempting to empower students or making arguments about the construction of knowledge or for social action, for instance, are practices and arguments that many composition scholars and teachers advocate for and practice in their classrooms. However, the history of feminist composition writing assignments in Chapter 1, the teachers' own understanding of how their assignments are feminist in Chapter

2, and this textual study of the corpus of feminist-oriented writing assignments show that these are consistent trends in the writing assignments of feminist teachers.

Additionally, by returning to the argument used in the graduate reflection assignment—that how we align ourselves pedagogically and academically matters because it connects us to a particular academic genealogy and history—can help us understand how and why understanding our individual feminist genealogies is important for assignments and praxis. In Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s “Genealogies, Legacies, and Movements,” they make a stronger argument than simply, we should take stock of our intersectionality as it relates to our academic genealogies. More than that, they argue that academic genealogies and legacies matter precisely because sometimes we inherit and continue to uphold (usually unknowingly) hegemonic oppressive discourses, ideologies, and actions. Their stories in this chapter point to the Euro-centric racism, sexism, and capitalism that they both encountered in Women and Gender Studies departments despite these department’s commitment to feminisms. While there is still often much anxiety about identifying and labeling an assignment or practice as feminist or not (see the teacher reflections in Chapter 2), I would argue that even though these feminist subjectivities, practices, and arguments sometimes overlap with other pedagogical schools, the point of this naming is whether or not one aligns themselves within an academic legacy of feminism.

My work is not advocating that all writing teachers should subscribe to feminist pedagogy. I personally am invested in and find value in what feminism adds to my philosophy of teaching writing; however, I understand that everyone must individually make choices regarding pedagogies and politics. What I am advocating for, though, is that for those who are

invested in feminist pedagogy, that pedagogy should inform what writing assignment texts look like—specifically how they position students, the assumptions and arguments they make, and how they construct feminism. This work is important both because it shapes students’ engagement and thinking—either in limiting or generative ways—and because this is an opportunity for teachers to be more conscious of their own academic genealogies and exactly what scholars and ideas are informing assignments, and thus, student learning. Although I’m working within a feminist framework here, I would advocate that whatever a teacher’s pedagogical orientation might be, the same is true: because pedagogy should be grounded in theory and it influences student learning, assignment texts should be evaluated for how they visibly reflect pedagogy.

4

Student Reflections on a Feminist Research Writing Assignment: A Local Case Study

“As a feminist composition teacher, I spend a good deal of time thinking about when and how my pedagogical choices reflect my values. Lately, I’ve found myself asking questions. On what assumptions about knowledge does this writing assignment rely? Can I disagree with this student without stifling the student’s authority with my own? Have these students been empowered? How do I know? How do they know? These hard questions originate in my desire to make the language that expresses my beliefs accountable to my circumstances, and they illustrate the complications I face as I work to instantiate my principles”

“From Principles to Particulars (and Back)” (321).

Lindgren, Margaret

“So the message is about what’s expected of them in the [assignment] text—but then, what happens after that, that you don’t have access to? And, I would say, increasingly, students don’t read the assignments. So, even if you give them the assignment in writing, you might orally deliver some version of the assignment—and that’s what they go with. And there’s no way to know that without doing classroom research. But, I just [...] think students don’t read—as carefully as we write those things, they don’t read them.”

Interview with Participant

Through studying feminist-oriented writing assignments as texts, I’ve thus far argued that feminist assignments orient students to a particularly political and contextualized understanding of the world in ways that attempt to empower them. But, how do students respond to carefully crafted and theoretically thoughtful assignment texts? Do they actually feel empowered by assignments that use empowering subjectivities? Do they benefit from a feminist orientation to the world that emphasizes constructivist epistemologies and contextualizing, historicizing, and complicating knowledges—or, do they even notice? As one participating teacher notes in the epigraph, whether or not teachers carefully craft the perfect

assignment text, some teachers may be suspicious of whether or not students actually return to the assignment handout or even read it in the first place.

Through an examination of my own writing course, pedagogy, a specific alternative research assignment, and students' writing and reflections on the assignments, this chapter offers a case study that examines three main aspects of teaching a writing assignment: the teacher's pedagogical hopes and objectives, the writing assignment as a text, and how students respond to and understand the assignment. Essentially, in this chapter I draw from the self-reflective questions that Margaret Lindgren notes in the epigraph to understand students' engagement with one assignment within a specific context (an upper-division research writing course) and within the larger framework of feminist pedagogy. In other words, this chapter will examine the following questions: How did I connect my feminist pedagogical values to a writing assignment that was not about feminist content? How do students understand and engage with assignments that are inherently feminist? What struggles and challenges do feminist writing assignments pose for students and teachers?

Through this examination of my own classroom, I've come to think about this work as a model for self-reflexive teaching. The larger framework here—and what I'm arguing for as a model—starts on the teaching side and moves from locating pedagogical motives to designing and teaching a writing assignment, a pretty typical trajectory for designing and teaching an assignment. On the self-reflection side, I'm advocating that we study our writing assignments as theoretical texts—and use that analysis coupled with student reflections to reflect on how our network of pedagogical influences functions through assignments and fosters student engagement. Throughout this chapter, I enact this model of self-reflexive analysis and locate

what is visible and invisible to students in terms of my pedagogical influences; in Chapter 5, I more clearly articulate the model as a heuristic method for other teachers.

What emerges, in the context of this specific course assignment, is a clear tension between my own feminist pedagogical hopes and motivations and what is visible to students—my other, mostly rhetorical pedagogical objectives. Despite clear feminist pedagogical intentions and rationales, my writing assignment text did not exemplify and forward those intentions in visible ways. Although this analysis is context-specific, the findings suggest that connecting pedagogy to assignments is not a clear-cut and easy process—it does not simply or mysteriously happen; thus, as teachers, we need to more consciously be aware of what we hope and want for a class and whether or not those pedagogical aims are visible for students or not.

Course Context & Pedagogical Objectives

Before getting into students' reactions and engagement, I will quickly consider the course context, the assignment, and my pedagogical aims. The course, Writing 303, is an upper-division research writing course that is described in the course catalog as follows:

Sustained research and writing project in a student's field of study or area of interest. Analysis of the rhetorics and methodologies of research.³³

My version of the course used a semester-long shared research inquiry in order to orient students to sustained research through studying Syracuse University (SU) student histories.

Thus, the course asked students to engage with the following questions: What are the student

³³ "Syracuse University Course Catalog: Search for "WRT"." (3, March 2015). <http://coursecatalog.syr.edu/search.aspx?cx=018015479555068583987:sr97mistwjc&cof=FORID:10&cat=2014&q=WRT+site%3acoursecatalog.syr.edu%2f2014%2f>

histories that have come before you? How can you tap into those histories and access them? What are the connections between student histories at SU and the relevant issues that matter to you today? Why do student histories matter? And, how can you utilize student histories to inform your thinking today?

The course, “Research, History & You,” was, in part, motivated by the SU University Archives’ webpage³⁴ devoted to the resources that cover different aspects of the 1970 student strike in response to the killing of Kent State students by the Ohio National Guard and the U.S.’s invasion of Cambodia. This SU library study guide connects students and researchers to a wide range of sources, including an MA thesis by James Eric Eichsteadt (1998), political posters, coverage by a variety of SU student publications, clippings, pictures, and several collections of papers from the administrations. The subject guide suggests not only rich possibilities for research that draws on a wide array of different types of local archival sources, but it also suggests the potential value for looking to student histories to understand and inform current institutional contexts, thinking, and potential actions. Indeed, this example informed my larger course goal of recovering SU student histories that are meaningful today, and it became a touchstone that we used throughout the course. While this activist example was intended to motivate students towards more socially engaged student histories, I consciously left the course inquiry (and thus, students’ research topics) open in an attempt to give students freedom and flexibility, aspects that are often necessary for archival research.

The local institutional interest in the 1970s SU student strike was coupled with my own investment in feminist rhetorics archival recovery projects. Feminist rhetorics scholars’ recovery

³⁴ “Subject Guides: 1970 Student Strike.” http://archives.syr.edu/collections/guides/student_strike.html

projects have successfully opened up access to the rhetorical tradition to women, women of color, and other less traditionally canonical rhetoricians. Susan Jarratt, for instance, has argued that recovering women's rhetorical histories can help "to create histories aimed at a more just future" (20). Additionally, two of David Gold's main objectives in *Rhetoric at the Margins* speak to the value of this work. He points out how his work has sought "to recover important histories that would otherwise be lost and give voice to the experiences of students and educators of a diverse past" and "to demonstrate persistent connections between the past and the present" (x-xi). The recovery work of feminist scholars, David Gold, and others inspired me to wonder whether or not that same project could be generative and engaging for undergraduate students. Using the SU student strike during the Vietnam era as an example, I hoped that the broad course inquiry on student histories would inspire students to see possibilities and student action of their past as informative for their contemporary lives. Thus, my main pedagogical aim was to have students conduct historical research and make it meaningful for contemporary audiences.

The basic unit trajectory began with archival research, moved to secondary research and interviews, and then concluded with a writing and revision intensive unit that focused on research audiences. The main assignment trajectory, as was listed in the syllabus³⁵, was:

Unit 1—(5 weeks) | Assignment: Sustained Research Project Proposal (25%)

In the first unit, you will be introduced to the course inquiry on SU student histories through an in-depth exploration of the archives. As we collectively map out the many available archives and materials that Bird Library houses on SU student histories, you will be challenged to locate your own research interests and relevant contemporary student issues. The bulk of this unit will be devoted to learning about archival research and library resources, locating individual research areas and questions, and understanding the course inquiry and trajectory. The unit's work will culminate in a sustained research proposal in which you will tell the story of how you

³⁵ See Appendix E for the full syllabus and final assignment.

came to a research area and topic through the preliminary archival research while also establishing a research agenda and questions.

Unit 2— (6 weeks) | Assignment: SyrGuide Wiki Article (25%)

In the second unit, you will be conducting research while we discuss the value of making research available to a wider audience. In the beginning of this unit, you may be following through with any individual archival research that will need to be completed and then you will continue to develop your project through secondary and qualitative primary research. Additionally, as a class we will be considering the audiences for different kinds of research and what it means to make research available to a wider, more popular audience. We will spend some time considering the how-to's of wiki writing as well as the specific rhetorical context of the wiki SyrGuide. Collectively, we will determine the scope of the SyrGuide wiki articles that you will be required to write as well as how they are arranged, tagged, and other project details.

Unit 3— (4 weeks) | Assignment: Research Product (20%) & Letter to an Audience (10%)

In Unit 3, you will be creating a very concrete response to our course question—*why does this specific SU student history matter?* The Research Product will require you first to locate a very specific SU audience, such as a student organization, campus office, or department, that might be interested in your research on an SU student history. Then, you will create a “research product” that the selected audience might use—anything from a short, informative video or podcast, to a power point, or a brochure, flier, or photo history. As our end goal will be to actually give these products to these audiences, the second part of the assignment will task you to write a 1-2 page letter to the audience that succinctly and professionally presents your research, your product, and a persuasive case for why this audience might benefit from the product. Thus, throughout Unit 3, as a class we will be investigating potential audiences, brainstorming various product genres, and discussing why these specific SU student histories matter.

Over the course of designing and then teaching this course, the final project has evolved a few times. Initially, I had imagined a final synthesis researched argument—simply because it seems like good sense to end an advanced research writing course with a long researched argument essay. Indeed, this simple assumption, a go-to genre I was familiar with and saw academic value in, was my personal exigency for this larger study of writing assignments: I wondered how, despite careful attention to pedagogy and course design, I could so quickly and easily resort to a final assignment that did not enact my larger course goal. An advisor asked me to articulate how a research paper would lead to my larger course goal of making student

histories matter; this question led to the above version of the assignment as a research artifact geared towards a specific SU audience that used an appropriate genre for that audience. And then, while teaching the course, students rejected the public requirement of the final project (which I will discuss more below), and this class decision led to the written component being a reflection on the rhetorical and genre-based decisions students made and why.

A Brief Note on Methods

The analysis that follows uses an adapted version of grounded theory to understand both the text of the final research assignment and students' final reflective blogs. The coding of the assignment text uses the same rhetorical genre studies framework (subjectivities, ideologies and arguments, and orientation to feminism) used to study the assignments in Chapter 3, whereas the coding of the students' blogs uses a more traditional version of grounded theory that relies on the data to create the initial categories. The reason for the different grounded theory approaches is that assignments as a genre contain consistent features that would likely be prominent in coding and are less relevant for this study (discussed in more detail in the methods section of Chapter 3); in contrast, students' reflections on the assignments are more organic and less formally structured.

As noted above, my work designing and teaching this course is what led to this dissertation project. Thus, the assignments were not designed with prior knowledge of the theoretical framework used to study the assignments in this dissertation. While I was conscious of my pedagogical motivations, I was not thinking about the theoretical aspects of the assignment texts (as examined in Chapter 3). Additionally, students' final blogs are a reflection

on the process of completing the final project; however, they were not asked to consider the influence of the assignment text itself.

Students provided consent for the use of their public blogs through email after the course was over. As an upper-division research writing course that focused on historical research, there were only 11 students enrolled in the course, only 9 of whom wrote a final reflection blog post. Thus, the data from the students' blogs is not intended to be generalizable, but rather an interesting case study of a set of students' engagement with one assignment.

In the analysis of the coding of the students' reflections below, I use quotes from students' blogs that are representative of the main coding categories and trends. All of the quotes used were coded for more than one category (as will be discussed), and only one quote was used from each blog in order to maximize a variety of student perspectives. While all of the blogs were coded over several rounds and used to develop categories, I use the students' own words as a means of narrating the findings (as opposed to an emphasis on codes and categories).

A Feminist Assignment (?): Supporting Theories & Coded Analysis

Although I was not thinking explicitly about how the text of the final assignment functioned theoretically, I was motivated pedagogically by Laura Micciche's claim that to utilize feminist theory doesn't necessarily mean taking up feminist content or readings. This is a claim that Kay Siebler has also made in *Composing Feminisms*—that feminist pedagogies and classrooms can be driven by feminist practices rather than feminist content. Thus, the archival course inquiry and final assignment allowed space for students to self-select any SU student

history they wanted to recover, rather than asking them to specifically recover feminist histories, student activism, etc. While feminist work is often associated with feminist content, I hoped that the course and assignment objectives would still forward feminist pedagogical values in ways that are influential.

The course's main feminist pedagogical objective developed from the idea that the feminist historical project of recovering previously ignored and marginalized histories makes space for a wider array of voices, creating the possibility of expansive and inclusive histories that open up real spaces for people today. As Nancy Welch, in *Living Room*, has put it: "lessons from the past bring an expanded sense of possibility, consequence, and risk to classroom" (9-10). I hoped that through recovering their own histories as students—perhaps not completely ignored or marginalized histories at SU, but certainly less widely available—I hoped students would be able to: create space for a wider array of identities and values; understand some of the power structures and political and material histories that have created the current campus culture; and essentially, find a way to make student histories matter for them today. While this course objective certainly doesn't forward feminist content in terms of readings, I imagined it as following some of the feminist historical research values that are present in recovery scholarship.

In addition to the feminist pedagogical motivation for this final assignment, I also drew a rationale from rhetorical genre studies and research on alternative research writing. There is quite a lot of composition scholarship that argues for the value of rhetorical assignments that have a "real" audience. From Irwin Weiser's 1987 "Better Writing through Rhetorically-based Assignments," to Erika Lindemann's chapter on "Making and Evaluating Writing Assignments"

(1987; 2001), to Traci Gardner's 2008 book, *Designing Writing Assignments*, creating assignments with audiences has long been valued and encouraged as a best practice. Drawing from social theories of genre that argue for the situated nature of genres, Mary Soliday has contributed to this work by explaining that the ability of writing skills to transfer across disciplines depends on our ability to teach not just genres, but the rhetorical situation that a genre responds to. Through case studies on desirable cross-disciplinary writing goals, like a writer's stance (or authorial perspective), Soliday has found that students are more successful when the writing assignment approximates a real rhetorical situation, or at least one that students find personally meaningful.

Unlike these studies, my final research writing assignment did not locate a specific rhetorical situation for students; rather, it emphasized that students needed to locate an appropriate audience and then genre. Through these aspects (genre and audience), students needed to have rhetorical agency and create and negotiate their own very specific rhetorical situation. In making students responsible for selecting an audience and an appropriate genre, my goal for this assignment was for them to place more emphasis on understanding their purpose for writing and having a real rhetorical situation that they were purposeful about.

Additionally, this assignment draws from Mark Shadle and Robert Davis' destabilizing of the traditional research paper. In "'Building a Mystery': Alternative Research Writing and the Academic Act of Seeking," Shadle and Davis argue that the traditional research paper assignment forwards "the modernist ideals of expertise, detachment, and certainty"—ideals that they argue are outdated and contribute to student disengagement. They explain:

We would like to believe that research writing teaches valuable skills and encourages students to commit to the academic ideals of inquiry and evidentiary reasoning.

However, it may be as often the case that the re-search paper assignment teaches students little more than the act of producing, as effortlessly as possible, a drab discourse, vacant of originality or commitment. (419)

In their critique, we can hear the echoes of disengagement but also a sense of the emotional response to a traditional research paper: detachment, boredom, and a lack of passion and motivation. Instead of perpetuating this disengagement, they advocate for alternative research writing tasks that emphasize “uncertainty, passionate exploration, and mystery” (418). I tried to capture the possibility for creative writing and thinking, cross-disciplinary knowledges, connections between research and the personal and public, and research as a process of uncertainty in this particular assignment. In fact, I also asked students to read Shadle and Davis’ argument for alternative research writing and to be consciously considering what difference it makes *how* they presented their research.

Thus, some of the specific outcomes for this advanced research writing class and the final assignment include:

- Connecting student interests with local contexts, histories, and cultures;
- Fostering an awareness of the power structures and political and material histories that have led to the current moment;
- Engaging students with the rhetorics of research and research publication;
- Challenging students to locate appropriate genres and local public audiences for their research; creating research products that are purposeful, meaningful, and useful for appropriate audiences;
- Fostering rhetorical agency through student control over audience, purpose, and genre.
- Challenging students to understand why historical research might matter for contemporary audiences.

I believe these course objectives, which culminated in the final assignment, speak to a wide array of theoretical trajectories. Even though these objectives may not be articulated in a way that explicitly names feminism, I think that the feminist politics nonetheless orients students to

a world where connections between past and present, and contemporary students and place are important. Additionally, the project sought to use research writing as a vehicle for fostering rhetorical agency and an investment in public writing.

Thus, pedagogically this course and final assignment bring together research and writing scholarship from, at the very least, feminist rhetorics, rhetorical genre studies, and work on alternative research writing. Much like the pedagogical genealogies and teaching identities discussed in Chapter 2, assignments also often pull together a variety of dynamic research influences and interests. The conscious construction of a pedagogy or an assignment draws on teachers' unique pedagogical genealogies, research interests, and perhaps the kairotic randomness of what one may be reading and thinking about during or prior to the design stages.

More than just what theory and pedagogy I, the teacher, claim an assignment is built on, the assignment also functions as a text and classroom genre after its design and circulation. Both of these parts of an assignment—the teacher's pedagogical influences and the function of the assignment text—are important for understanding how an assignment works. However, often the teacher's pedagogical motivation is less visible, unless discussed publically, written about, or clearly articulated in the text of the assignment. The text of the assignment is a classroom genre that shapes students' thinking, invention, and writing, and is potentially more consequential than the influences—and thus, necessary to study as a means of understanding the translation of pedagogical values into the classroom. Using the rhetorical genre studies framework in combination with grounded theory on my own assignment, I primarily found that there are no explicit references to feminism; students are positioned as researchers and

experts on their projects; and, the main argument the assignment makes is that research is as meaningful as a researcher makes it.

In terms of subjectivities, the assignment text recalls all of the research students have completed throughout the semester and names them as the main experts on their individual history. The opening paragraph reads:

Throughout the first two units of this semester, you have engaged in a substantial sustained research project that required archival, ethnographic, and secondary research. You have located a specific SU student history of interest, gathered documents and data, read supplemental information, analyzed your findings, and determined your project's research contexts within a particular disciplinary trajectory. Now, you are the expert on your specific research area and SU student history!

The listing of the accomplished research is a fairly common way to begin a final research paper assignment. Whether students have felt engaged with the course or not, the assumption is that they have actively completed the required research. Precisely because of the nature of archival research as a means to recovering histories, the position of “the expert” carries more weight because most of the students’ topics had never been researched formally before (that we could find); thus, *the expert* implies the sole expert on this topic. Additionally, the assumed role of “researcher” carries more meaning because of the breadth of different kinds of research that they had been required to conduct. Archival research and historical analysis of primary documents were research methods that most of the students had not previously conducted.

Students are also positioned as having unique individual resources to contribute to their final projects. In a fairly small moment, the assignment says:

For this Unit 3 Assignment, you should have fun and be creative! Try to draw on your resources—skills and connections that you have already developed or are related to your individual major.

This statement positions students as having discipline-specific or individual skills and resources that would aid in their ability to be creative with the assignment's design, genre, and general creation. The statement encourages students to connect the learning in their current project to their previous educational experiences and skills—using those skills in potentially new ways and in different contexts. Thus, students are empowered through the text of the assignment to locate any skills or resources that would foster their creativity and enjoyment in the final project. The assumption is that students have rich and diverse skills from their majors, they have the power (and permission) to make the assignment fun and creative, and that connecting previous knowledges to current (potentially unrelated) projects is a valuable endeavor.

The first and primary subjectivity—students as researchers and experts—is directly connected to the arguments that the assignment makes about historical research. The main assignment paragraph reads:

In Unit 3, we will attempt to create a very concrete answer to the question driving this course: *why and how do SU student histories matter?* While we have been talking generally as a class about this question all semester, this unit you will be required to answer the question more precisely for your own specific research project and SU student history. The first part of the work of this unit, then, will be locating a specific contemporary audience that would benefit from your research. For instance, you will need to determine what SU student group, such as a specific fraternity, student organization, religious group, etc., or SU office or department, such as the library, student affairs, admissions, etc., would be interested in your research findings on a specific institutional history. Then, *after* you have chosen an audience, you will create a research product for that specific audience that makes your research findings useful for that audience. Your “research product” can be anything from an informative or creative video, a podcast, a power point, a collage, a brochure, a flier, a pamphlet, a photo history or timeline, or Daily Orange article. There are no limitations on what your product can be; however, *your decision about the product should be directly related to what your specific, selected audience might actually use. As our end goal is to give these products to the selected audiences, you will need to justify why the type of product you chose to create is useful for that audience.*

Throughout this paragraph and the rest of the assignment text, there are several smaller arguments being made, including: SU student histories *do* matter; a specific and contemporary audience will benefit from their research projects; historical research should be *useful* for contemporary audiences; and, there is a direct relationship between a genre and the audience it is intended for. In general, there are a lot of arguments about how and why historical research matters and what that means rhetorically.

Additionally, there are moments of the argument that are directly connected to the subjectivities students are positioned in. The sections of the above quote that are highlighted orange connect students' role as researchers and experts to particular responsibilities involved with the research. In the first highlighted section, students are "required to answer the question more precisely for your own specific research project and SU student history." The word "required" certainly suggests a clearer and more realistic situation: as students, the structure of a class and assignments is essentially a contract that requires them to do the work. However, the positioning of students as the main experts on their research (in the previous paragraph) also suggests that the task of making their SU student history matter is one that only they can do; there is thus, an implied logic that they have a certain responsibility to the history to present it to an audience that would value it.

Similarly, in the second orange section, students are given the responsibility "to justify why the type of product you chose to create is useful for that audience" because "our end goal is to give these products to the selected audiences." In this statement, students—as experts and researchers—are also positioned within a larger collective with a shared goal: giving research products to appropriate audiences. Asking students to *justify* their rhetorical choices

positions them as being responsible for actually following through and making their historical research meaningful. An implied argument running through much of this section is that rhetorical agency is necessary for making historical research matter. In other words, students' decisions about the audience, genre, product design, and general translation of the research (or, their ability to claim rhetorical agency for their research) is related to how valuable and meaningful their final research projects will be. Essentially, this assignment suggests students have the ability to make their research meaningful or not.

Looking at my own pedagogical motivations in relation to the grounded theory coding of the final assignment suggests there are some connections between the two, but there are other pedagogical motivations that are less visible in the text. The text of the assignment emphasizes students as accomplished researchers, experts on their history, and as responsible for both using rhetorical agency effectively and making their research meaningful. The main pedagogical interest that comes through in the text is from rhetorical genre studies—the goal of having a clear and defined rhetorical situation for a project. What is far less visible is the interest and value that I find in historical recovery work as a feminist political project that creates space, values a wider array of identities, and is valuable today. The question this observation leads to is whether or not a clear articulation in the assignment text of why I see historical research as meaningful would have helped students to find more contemporary connections and value in their historical research projects or not.

The missing feminist perspective suggests the need for a re-evaluation of *how* we enact Laura Micciche's motivational claims for infusing “feminist thinking” into assignments not

emphasizing feminist content. In her own example assignments³⁶ in “Writing as Feminist Rhetorical Theory,” Laura Micciche asks students to engage with parody, intentional arguments, and interruptions as writing modes that espouse “feminist thinking” and have students “*doing* feminist rhetorics” (184). The feminist political force and rationale behind these assignments is mainly visible in her second assignment through the use of feminist theory as a part of the explicit textual rationale for the assignment. This does not necessarily mean that either my assignment or Micciche’s other two are not feminist—or, that asking students to do parody, for instance, can’t be explained as feminist in less explicit ways; however, the feminist politics and “feminist thinking” is less clearly visible in the text of the assignment.

Whether or not this visibility is desired and warranted will depend on the specific contexts; however, in my case, somehow my main feminist pedagogical motivation wasn’t carried forward by this particular assignment—and in this particular case, this omission hindered students’ ability to understand the value of recovery work. The implication is that the feminist pedagogical aims a teacher has will not automatically be visible in an assignment; if the feminist pedagogical aims are an important aspect of a class and assignment, teachers do need to more consciously build them into the text of assignments. Textual visibility in an assignment doesn’t necessarily mean labeling assignments as feminist or not; rather, assignment texts can use feminist theory as examples or touchstones (as Micciche does) or simply explain the feminist politics that are relevant and supportive, among other ways (see Chapter 3 for additional methods).

³⁶ These are considered in more depth in Chapter 1.

Despite this missing pedagogical value, my final assignment text does position students as responsible for making their historical research meaningful and for locating an appropriate rhetorical situation for it; these two aims do effectively offer students rhetorical agency, a feminist value that is clearly visible in the text, though not discussed in terms of the politics of agency. Thus, I'm advocating for a visibility that is less motivated by what a teacher can read into aspects of an assignment (i.e., As a rhetoric and composition teacher, I can claim and support how agency is a feminist interest.), but rather a visibility of feminist pedagogical aims that a student can recognize and use to inform their thinking and writing (e.g., A textual explanation of how recovery research is important because it gives voice to neglected and marginalized people and creates space for others today.).

This process of critically examining my own network of pedagogical influences in relation to a grounded theory coding of the assignment text is interesting because it shows the complexity of the translation of pedagogy to assignment text. The assignment effectively empowers students through rhetorical agency and their research expertise; in other words, some of my initial pedagogical aims were visible in the assignment text, whereas some (the value of recovery research) were not. While these direct and indirect translations of pedagogy to assignment text may seem like small considerations, they do suggest that the process of translating pedagogy to text is complex, messy, and perhaps far less direct than we imagine.

Student Perspectives

In the second epigraph quote, one of the participating teachers noted that despite my interest in the text of assignments—indeed, in spite of all teachers' careful assignment design

and development—students may not even actually read or pay much attention to these documents as texts. Unfortunately, this study does not get at the nuances between students' engagement with the assignment text versus classroom discussions about the assignments; though, such future research would be valuable. But, looking at students' blog reflections on the assignment does offer insights into students' engagement, feelings, and reflections in relation to a feminist assignment. Students' reflections suggest some of the challenges involved with teaching a feminist writing assignment and a need for reconsidering how we are assessing student engagement with such assignments.

For their final blog reflections, I asked students to critically reflect on what they perceived to be the value of the final assignment and the research they conducted throughout the semester. As the purpose of the class was to help students to conduct research that matters and consider the process of *making research matter*, the final blog was intended as a moment for them to consider whether or not they felt their final projects had actually done that, and if so, how. A screenshot of the final blog prompt³⁷ shows the specific set of questions students were asked to consider:

For our final class, I would like everyone to write one last blog prompt that considers the following questions critically:

- Critically reflect on the value of the final research project and reflection assignment: did you find this assignment to be valuable? Do you think that considering alternative ways to present research was useful? Interesting? Annoying? Why? Another way of thinking about this question is: given the choice between a final, formal research essay and the project we did (locating a real audience and appropriate genre), which would be more productive and why?
- Critically reflect back on the entire semester: this semester, you engaged with a major, sustained research project; you conducted three kinds of research: archival, secondary, and qualitative (the interviews). What do you think of the research you conducted? Do you think of research in the same way that you did? What were some of the most valuable or useful assignments, activities, or discussions—and why? What will you take away from this class?

³⁷ The blog post assignment can be found: <https://kenavick.expressions.syr.edu/>

The following analysis of students' engagement will use student quotes that are representative of the following trends in order to tell their stories (in part). The coding of their blogs resulted in the following six categories, which are listed in order from most frequent references to least:

- Student Descriptions of the Assignment (45)
- Struggles, Challenges, Difficulties (35)
- Things Learned (25)
- Writing for an Audience (21)
- Previous Class Assignments, Discussions, or Activities (17)
- Student Firsts (16)

Obviously, some of these categories stem directly from my own writing prompt—essentially, the prompt asked students to describe the assignment and to reference valuable classroom activities and discussions. However, the prompt did not explicitly ask students to discuss challenges or the assignment's focus on an audience. These two categories and their frequencies suggest that students found the focus on a real audience to be a central component of the assignment and that they had an abundant amount of struggles.

Student Struggles

"At first I wasn't sure how relevant it would be for us to present our work in a way different from the SyrGuide [the second Wiki assignment], but after finishing my project, I have concluded that we were forced to find the best audience for our history as well as the best way to present our research to this specific audience; something I never really gave much thought to in the past. Honestly, being given the freedom to choose what we did with our research was actually pretty hard- I'm used to having very strict guidelines for a final project, so by having to think outside of the box and be creative, I think I was challenged significantly." (From Peter's blog)

"What was frustrating about this project was just how much work went into the little amount of info that I could fit on my brochure. Most of my final project did not come from the archives and most of the info was informational not historical. I do not think that research is practical, so

it was hard to have any of the 'research' in the final product. The project we did was easier and worked better for the non-writing majors in our class. I think that a formal research essay would have been more productive because it was extremely frustrating to have all of this research and nothing to do with it. It was almost disappointing to not write a paper, because the research took so much time. Also I had to do extra research to finish project three because what I had (historical info) was not useful to MSA [the Muslim Student Association; the student's research topic and audience].

The research I conducted was fragmented. I had to pull so hard to get any of my material to relate to one another and the archival process was horrible. The first unit felt like a mess because we did not have a thesis to really base our search on. There was a complete lack of direction, no matter how hard we attempted to find one. With the archives, if something wasn't there then we had to completely flip directions, even though we could have found the info online. I love secondary research, because the internet is amazing. All of my useful information came from the internet. I do think of research the same as I did before this class, because I have always avoided the library and relied on the internet and this class [sic; class] reaffirmed my habits. The second unit assignment was the most valuable because it was the closest to writing a research paper. The wiki article used all of the information we had found, even if it did not have a *real* thesis." (From Heather's blog)

Throughout the nine student blogs, various struggles and specific difficulties were the second largest category with 35 codes. Most of the struggles listed (21 codes) were directly related to the final project, whereas there were a few that were either vague (e.g., "this work was challenging") or there were general references to archival research being challenging. Beyond the general, there were a number of references to very specific struggles and challenges, including difficulty with: locating enough effective sources; time constraints and library visits; more research than could fit into the final project; archival research that was messy and required changing directions; selecting and creating the genre; making research persuasive for a specific audience; balancing accuracy with opinions; and, assignment freedom (choices), among several other specific challenges.

The above two quotes were coded for several of the categories in addition to challenges and struggles; however, they both represent interesting and different perspectives on the

struggles and challenges of the assignment. On the one hand, the coding alone suggests this huge array of challenges and struggles that students articulated as general and very specific descriptions of the challenges. On the other hand, these two quotes—especially positioned back to back—show that there is some overlap and relationship between some of the specific struggles articulated, whether they were framed as positive struggles or not. Specifically, many of the struggles can be summarized as students being challenged by both the newness of the research and the freedom of choice they were given in the assignment—freedom that is often denied to students in academic writing.

In the first quote, the student, I've called Peter, offers his initial thinking that the second assignment—the SyrGuide Wiki project—would be the best way to present this research; this sentiment is confirmed by the second student, Heather, who says “The second unit assignment was the most valuable because it was the closest to writing a research paper. The wiki article used all of the information we had found, even if it did not have a *real* thesis” (original emphasis). One key difference between these reflections is that Peter, upon completing the final project and reflecting on it, has found meaning and value in the final project, whereas Heather still claims to prefer the second assignment. The second, SyrGuide Wiki³⁸, assignment was a dynamic project because it was a digital resource that was created through the collaboration of multiple classes, and as a text, it has the capacity for tagging, linking, and images. However, the wiki texts were essentially, as with Wikipedia, reports—summaries that reported and synthesized students’ ongoing research on their histories from an objective perspective. In other words, both of these students entered the final project believing the best,

³⁸ <http://syrguide.com/guide/>

most effective way to present research is through a report—and one student finished the class still believing this.

Peter, in the first quote, goes on to note that he must conclude, “we were *forced* to find the best audience for our history as well as the best way to present our research to this specific audience” (emphasis added). He claims that he had never considered an audience for his research before, and that the freedom and creativity of this assignment went against the “very strict guidelines” he was more accustomed to. Peter’s narrative suggests an initial hesitancy, unfamiliarity with making research meaningful for specific audiences, and then a sort of arrival point—through reflection, he came to understand that he “learned a TON this semester,” in part, through the critical thinking “forced” on him from navigating the challenges of the assignment. Peter’s narrative does follow the expected progress narrative that we may come to expect from reflection assignments; indeed, many of the blog reflections enacted this dynamic between naming specific struggles, but overcoming through lessons learned.

With the progress narrative so firmly rooted in reflective writing, what can actually be learned from studying such student reflections? Can we even trust students’ claims to have “learned a TON this semester” when they are situated within such a standard and pervasive cultural script as a progress narrative (especially one that a teacher evaluates)? Through juggling coding on the sentence level with a more macro look at the blogs, I can say that there is something noteworthy in students’ ability to articulate such a wide array of very specific challenges. I would argue that this naming of challenges—especially the challenges of freedom of choice, newness of the task, and struggles around genre and the rhetorical situation—suggests that the writing assignment itself did not allow students to circumvent the work and struggle of the task,

in ways that they may be accustomed to doing for more typical assignments, like the more traditional research paper. Thus, the struggles and challenges suggest that the rhetorical complexity and newness of the writing project fostered student engagement—perhaps precisely because they were “forced” to have rhetorical agency to complete the task.

While Heather’s longer reflection is certainly not a very flattering one for me to consider, by juxtaposing it against Peter’s, I think we can see how even in a very honest reflection that does not use the progress narrative, some of the same ingrained writing beliefs and values are embedded in the articulation of the challenges. I should note that Heather’s critique is the only truly negative reflection that utterly denies learning and valuing of the experience of the final project. Heather was a very engaged writing major, taking the class as a senior, who despite her engagement, was often openly critical of the project of the class, doing archival research, and being forced outside of her comfort zone. Despite her negativity (which was also directly related to a host of personal problems she willingly disclosed to me), Heather’s reflection must be taken seriously.

Beyond preferring the wiki assignment, Heather’s reflection almost disdainfully articulates a wide variety of struggles, including: the amount of work; the tension surrounding research used (what she calls informational and internet based research) in her final project and the larger amount of archival research that wasn’t directly used; the tensions around what she believes counts as a useful genre (her brochure versus a traditional research paper); the fragmented and messy nature of archival research; and, the lack of a thesis (before conducting research and for writing). The strongest strain connecting her struggles, though, is her related claims: “I do not think that research is practical,” and “I think that a formal research essay would have been more productive.” Both of these very firm and strong claims speak to a deeply ingrained comfort and belief in the inherent value of the institutionally bound traditional research paper. Her two

references to a lack of a thesis suggest a strong belief in the ability of the thesis to guide the research process (she suggests it would've made archival research less messy to have one at the beginning) and to legitimate and organize research writing (she suggests that the wiki was an acceptable project even though it didn't have a real thesis). Heather's statements suggest that she finds research writing without a thesis to be suspicious and certainly less valuable, a claim that makes sense from a student who has internalized the research paper as an ideal, despite the genre's typical lack of use-value or an audience.

While it's easy to question Peter's reflection based on the imbedded progress narrative, I am likewise suspicious of the relationship between Heather's critiques and her personal issues, comfort criticizing others openly, discomfort with vulnerability (especially in relation to the project), and perhaps what I sometimes saw as a simple desire to be a contrarian. Despite these hesitations, I believe that the larger trend towards articulating challenges coupled with this smaller strand of institutionally ingrained comfort with the research paper both support a need to critically examine this firmly rooted belief in the research paper genre. Both of their responses, though different in tone, echo Davis and Shadle's earlier critiques of the modernist values of "expertise, detachment, and certainty" forwarded by the research paper as a genre (418). They suggest that students will either struggle to enact the conventions of the research paper or, like my students:

Those students who learn the rules, however, often suffer another dilemma-an apparent unwillingness or inability to think imaginatively or originally. Many of the teachers we know complain that even advanced students are content to do what they know how to do: present the knowledge made by others, write within set conventions, and produce what they have been conditioned to believe teachers want. The teaching of research writing is often part of this conditioning: by asking students to stick to researching the known, we teach them to fear the unknown. (425-6)

The two blogs I've looked at closely seem to echo this fear of the unknown in their reflections. Even Peter's more positive consideration of challenges and growth uses "forced" to describe how he negotiated the openness of the assignment. While these two students most clearly articulated challenges that are directly related to a comfort with the traditional research paper, many of the challenges other students referenced similarly point to versions of this same comfort and conditioning.

But what do these student-articulated struggles—especially in relation to non-traditional research writing assignments—mean in terms of pedagogy? While these student responses are an example that supports Davis and Shadle's arguments about the effects of traditional research papers, they also suggest the *challenges for the teacher* in using assignments that push students beyond their comfort zones—in terms of disciplinary genres, research, freedom to control writing and the assignment, and in their willingness to accept agency. These challenges for the teacher are perhaps most clearly audible in the tone of Heather's reflections and in Peter's use of the word "forced." In other words, student engagement and learning, especially in the context of challenging assignments, may involve pushback, challenges to the teacher, and open acknowledgement of ongoing struggles.

For me, feminist teaching is about transforming students' understandings of what is possible. Often, we talk about transformations in terms of feminist pedagogy as consciousness raising, destabilizing power dynamics and hierarchies, or creating awareness of and working against social injustices. While I agree that all of these aspects of feminist teaching are important, I would argue for a wider consideration of transformation, one that includes smaller transformations against institutional expectations, dominant discourses, and ingrained

schooling practices. In the latest Oxford edition of *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, Laura Micciche concludes her chapter on feminist pedagogy by noting that:

Learning in feminist classrooms, as I can attest, is frequently emergent, less measurable than is perhaps fashionable in assessment talk. In a way, this inchoateness is its most powerful effect: These classrooms can make you feel differently about the world, creating alternative alignments with others and investments in wild, imaginative, hopeful, unorthodox futures. (140)

More than “less measurable,” I think these students’ reflections on the challenges of this assignment suggest feminist writing assignments that seek to transform student perspectives on research, institutional histories, and what’s possible will result in an inevitable struggle beyond the familiar and comfortable. We might even think of assessing such efforts in terms of student discomfort and challenges faced. As articulated by Micciche, whether this occurs within a semester or perhaps even after, the end goal of such assignment experiences is to foster a sense of other possibilities, “alternative alignments,” and different ways of doing and being.

Writing for a Real Audience

“I found this valuable because this was the first time I was asked to find a certain audience and create a product designed for them. In most other academic research I have done, there has been no audience that I have written for besides my professor. Looking at my material in alternate ways was an eye-opener. It was hard because it required me to look at my information in much more detail in some parts, and it meant that there were other parts that I would never use. This was interesting because it allowed me to sell my idea to an audience of certain interests and made me highlight some materials that would not fit right in a formal research essay.” (From Dan’s blog)

“With most research topics – and mine in particular – finding an audience and genre is critical. I say this not in the sense that the two are not critical in all papers, but that mine, in particular, benefits most from these standards. Moving past informative writing to present research with novelty and exigence has become especially important in the digital age when so much informative writing already exists. Distinguishing your writing and creating meaning can only be accomplished through this method. As such, I have found my final product to be engaging, interesting and clearly more productive.” (From Alex’s blog)

“I feel I have gotten more out of it that I have in other more traditional writing courses which in the end, culminate in a very long, tedious to write, paper that no one will ever read except for the professor. This project was much more productive, useful to others and I was able to share what I have learned with others.” (From Olive’s blog)

“That said, I think that opposed to learning “how to do research” did not end up being as valuable as the final unit, learning how to convey that research and make it useful. Our discussions about audiences really helped me understand just how research can be made persuasive depending on who it is being presented to.” (From Jay’s blog)

The second category that I will explore in more depth is students’ emphasis on writing for an audience. Although with 21 codes (or references) for audience, this category is fourth (in terms of numbers of codes, or times referenced), there is quite a lot of overlap between the categories of writing for an audience, student firsts, things learned, and challenges and difficulties. This is evident in the above quotes, but audience was also referenced in both of the quotes discussed in terms of challenges and struggles (the previous section). In terms of the trend of referencing the project’s audience, like challenges and struggles, students had a variety of very specific and different things they mentioned, including: students had to study potential audiences; directing to an audience gave the project more purpose; information and design had to be considered for a specific audience; choosing the audience made the assignment more personal for students; research can and should be made persuasive for the specific audience; and a specific audience meant that students could highlight materials that might not normally fit into a specific research essay, among other noteworthy comments about audience.

In addition to the very specific but different references regarding audiences, there are two related, though smaller, strands. First, out of the nine blogs, three different students explicitly said that this was the first time they had ever had to create, write, and design

something for a specific audience. Second, two students said that normally, the professor is the only audience they have for their assignments. Of course, these aren't huge numbers; however, there were only two reflections that did not reference the newness of the assignment (a separate but related category), writing for an audience, or typically writing for a professor. Interestingly, in a class of mostly juniors and seniors, most of the students found writing an assignment with a real audience to be an entirely new experience.

As noted earlier, this assignment originally asked students to create a research product and write a letter to the audience that introduces and gives the product to the audience. However, several students openly fought the public requirement. Initially, I understood their demands to change the public requirement as an act of resistance or disengagement; I thought if I simply allowed them to think about the public aspect for a few weeks, maybe they would warm up to the idea. Unfortunately, none of the students wrote about this moment in the final reflections (or other blogs), so I do not have their words in retelling this classroom moment. The more I listened to and considered students' in-class reasons for not wanting to publicize these projects, the more sympathetic I was to revising the assignment. Heather, whose reflection is quoted at length in the struggles and challenges section above, argued that her audience—the Muslim community at SU—was a very sensitive community that already struggled internally over tensions regarding very small differences. She strongly believed that even a very straightforward informational brochure on the Muslim Student Association's history could be a potentially contentious act—one that could be detrimental for her role in the community.

Of course, not every student opposed the public aspect, and the other reasons for not publicizing were not as persuasive as Heather's. However, in retrospect, the overwhelming emphasis on audience in their reflections and the project's newness suggests that students understood sending their research projects to a real audience as having high stakes—higher stakes than a research paper solely for a professor. Even their ability as a class to recognize and critically consider the high stakes suggests a certain level of student engagement and care for the project. In the end, even before having the final blog reflections, I made the decision to make the public aspect of the assignment optional; instead of the letter, students were asked to write a critical reflection on the rhetorical choices they made for the products. This flexibility was a direct response to students' emotional and rational responses to the original public requirement. While I do always hope to push students beyond their comfort zones, I also acknowledge that there can be discomfort that is unproductive and public writing can have real material consequences. Regardless of whether or not students gave their products to their audiences, however, even the prospect of doing so—as evidenced by their reflections—had a big impact on how they experienced and engaged with the project.

Beyond the significance that students placed on the newness of writing for a real audience, the longer and more varied list of specific references to audience is more than just a focus on audience, but often students are referencing the larger rhetorical situation of the writing project. Their references make connections between audience and purpose, genre, writing and design styles, larger context—and even exigence. These references suggest that writing assignments are more engaging, and of course challenging, when they have a specified rhetorical situation that can influence specific decisions and make writing more meaningful.

The above quotes demonstrate small moments where students are making connections between their research, content, larger cultural context, being persuasive and the selected audiences. Dan and Jay, for instance, both reference making their research more persuasive. For example, Dan says, "...it allowed me to sell my idea to an audience of certain interests and made me highlight some materials that would not fit right in a formal research essay." Dan is discussing how the ideas and content that are used are directly related to the selected audience; having a more tangible audience, "besides my professor," allowed Dan the freedom and creativity to use materials that might normally be discarded from a more traditional research paper.

Another student, Alex, notes the relationship between audience, exigence, and context. He says, "Moving past informative writing to present research with novelty and exigence has become especially important in the digital age when so much informative writing already exists." Alex's insight relates a need for exigence and novelty to the context of a contemporary digital age; this perception suggests his awareness of the vast array of information and texts digital audiences must sort through, and some of the desires and motivations of digital audiences. These example quotes suggest that students found writing for a specific audience to be central to understanding, crafting, and negotiating the entire rhetorical situation for their projects. This work was, of course, very challenging, project-specific, and new for them.

In terms of pedagogy, these student reflections suggest strong connections between my pedagogical aims to destabilize the traditional research paper and give students rhetorical agency. On a personal level, these student reflections make me excited about continuing to create research projects that demand rhetorical agency, give students freedom and choices,

and argue for the significance of doing work that is meaningful and useful to others. The implications on a broader level, for composition research, are that useful and meaningful writing are often self-directed to audiences and for purposes that we individually locate and negotiate. In other words, building assignments and projects into the curriculum that encourage students to practice rhetorical agency for real projects gives students a stronger sense of how the rhetorical situation functions in all writing. While rhetorical agency may always have to be “forced” onto students and often results in at least some resistance—certainly as long as more strictly defined research papers exist—the benefits and value students gain from such projects seem well worth the challenges.

The Visibility of Feminism in Assignment Texts: Moving Towards a Model of Self-Reflexive Teaching

Through this self-evaluation of my pedagogy and research writing assignment by means of a textual analysis of the assignment text and student reflections, issues of visibility have arisen. In terms of the assignment text, this case study questions what pedagogical motivations and objectives are visible to students (or not)—and what difference this makes in student engagement. While it may seem like a small point—that my feminist rhetorical recovery pedagogical motivation was not visible in the assignment—precisely because this was a very political motivation that may have benefited students’ understanding and writing, I do wish I had been clearer about why I saw the recovery project as meaningful.

The implications of this self-examination of the translation of pedagogy to assignments is that as teachers, the things that we carry with us into the classroom—our pedagogical

objectives and desires—are not always clearly visible for students. While there have been previous debates regarding politically and ideologically driven pedagogies (See: Berlin and Hairston exchange, 2003), for feminist teachers aiming to challenge students to transform their thinking and world, the feminist politics, “feminist thinking,” or feminist orientation to the world is a critical aspect of an assignment that should be visible. Thus, as teachers, we should be aware of the pedagogical influences and aims that matter most for particular assignments and find ways to make such aims both visible and inclusive for students.

Making feminist pedagogical aims visible in textual assignments can be done subtly, rhetorically, and without necessarily referencing feminism. In other words, I’m not suggesting we label assignments as feminist or not in the prompt. However, I am advocating for a more precise understanding of the pedagogical link that can and should be articulated—and a thorough consideration of how that will be useful for students in shaping their thinking and writing. These connections can be made in assignment texts through the use of heuristic questions, assignment rationales, and references to feminist perspectives and theories, among other ways. Essentially, I’m arguing that as writing teachers we can be more conscious of how our own teaching materials function theoretically, textually, and materially to inform student engagement and writing.

Beyond my own self-reflexive classroom analysis, I’m advocating for this framework as a method for self-reflexive teaching, one that I will more fully develop in the Conclusion (Chapter 5). Indeed, visualizing and diagraming my own pedagogical aims, assignment text, and student reflections (as enacted with infographic in Appendix F) was a useful tool for thinking about

pedagogy as a larger process and force. In Chapter 5, I will expand on this model as a heuristic method for self-reflexive practice for other writing teachers and TAs.

5

Conclusion: Designing Pedagogically Purposeful Writing Assignments

“It is in the conscious attention to worldview and goals that teaching becomes pedagogy”

Amy Rupiper Taggart et al. (4)

Throughout this dissertation, I have been studying how feminist writing assignments work as classroom texts; through this process, I have essentially been answering the questions: What is a feminist writing assignment? How have scholars historically identified feminist writing assignments? How do contemporary feminist teachers use feminism in their writing assignments? And how have I created assignments that enact feminism in my own classes? Through this investigation, I have found that the translation of feminist pedagogy into writing assignments is a complex and messy process that may or may not always be conscious for teachers. Despite their significance in potentially shaping student thinking, writing and engagement, writing assignments do not always directly and visibly reflect pedagogical hopes and desires.

While all of the chapters support this central claim, throughout the dissertation, I have come to it through an evolution of smaller observations about feminist pedagogy, writing assignments, and the translation of pedagogy into writing assignments. These observations add up to claims about the nature of writing assignments, the character of feminist writing assignments, and what we gain from studying writing assignments. As a means of bringing together the findings of this dissertation, I will examine these three sets of claims through

reflections on and examples from each of the chapters. To conclude, I will consider the implications of this study for writing program administrators for writing across the curriculum initiatives, teacher training, and professional development events. As my findings and claims all point to the significance of pedagogical reflection and more conscious attention to connecting pedagogical philosophies to writing assignment texts—as a means of fostering student invention and writing—I make a case for visually mapping pedagogy and offer a heuristic method for developing writing assignments that do visibly connect pedagogy to the assignment text.

Findings: Feminist Pedagogy & Feminist Writing Assignments

1 | The Nature of Writing Assignments

Observation: Feminist pedagogies are individual and heterogeneous; they are informed by an individual's specific genealogy of scholarly interests, research areas, theories, and teachers/mentors; local and national institutional contexts and institutional position/status; departmental values and learning objectives; and, how a person comes to feminism, defines feminism, and is connected to feminism through texts, theories, and people; among other additional aspects. Yet, despite these numerous and individual influences, there are some shared historical strands to feminist pedagogy, and out of this network of influences, teachers select different aspects that are more/less resonant, useful, and meaningful from which to draw.

This first observation develops from Chapter 1, "A History of Feminist Writing Assignments in Composition Scholarship." Looking at scholarship from the 1970s until today in feminist composition establishes an investment in identity issues and in personal experiences as two trends in feminist writing assignments that cross all eras of scholarship. Studying examples of how feminist writing assignments use personal experiences or identity in different eras suggests the significant pedagogical influence of historical contexts, composition theory,

and larger scholarly trends, influences, and shifts. In other words, tracing these two trends across eras shows how differently identity and the use of personal experiences can be taken up in assignments based on historical and scholarly contexts.

For example, personal experiences and identity were brought together by early in-class writing assignments from the 1970s-80s that asked students to reflect on their writing hang ups, processes, and blocks (Annas; Daumer & Runzo; Howe). This assignment uses personal experiences in relation to writing in order to address gender inequality. The goal, which was especially directed towards female students, was to empower students by helping them to locate their own voice and by helping them to understand how gender (and other material, economic, and social factors) may be working to oppress them (in writing and life). In the 70s and 80s, this assignment was influenced by expressivist trends in composition studies that sought to help students locate their authentic voices/selves, by feminist political efforts towards gender equality and making the personal political, as well as by the relationship of writing courses to English departments, among other contexts. What made these exercises feminist was usually each scholar's explanation of how the activity was attached to feminist political aims, i.e., empowering female students.

This same feminist investment in identity issues and personal experiences can be seen in writing assignments published in scholarship in the 1990s and 2000s, although the contexts, influences, and purposes have shifted. For example, some of Wendy Hesford's briefly referenced assignments bring attention to identity and personal experiences, except through the more postmodern lens, situated interests and contexts of the late 1990s. For example, she asked students to "investigate how identities and differences are negotiated and produced in

their everyday lives on campus for a unit [she] call[s] *The Politics of Location and Experience*” (*Framing* 63). Hesford’s interest in educational experiences and language politics echo the earlier assignments on writing process. However, more than just telling stories about educational or campus experiences, Hesford challenges students to understand these experiences as shaped and constructed by larger historical, cultural, and social forces that are specific to their identities, spaces, and time. In other words, Hesford encourages students to conduct an analysis and theorize their identity with a grounded attention to history and contexts. One of the aspects of this assignment that distinguishes it from similar earlier assignments (that rely on identity and personal experiences) is that Hesford’s use of identity is informed by Rich’s “Politics of Locations” (as the unit’s title suggests) and thus, a more intersectional approach to identity (likely, in addition to other contexts and scholarship).

The history of feminist writing assignments in scholarship suggests the extent to which historical and scholarly contexts influence assignments; specifically, feminist pedagogy is historically influenced by various contexts, politics, composition theory, and larger academic theories and trends—and these influences directly inform and shape the writing assignments that are shared, published and used in the classroom. Chapter 2, “Defining Feminist Pedagogy & Assignments: Teacher Perspectives,” further advances this observation about the nature of writing assignments by acknowledging the complex and situated network of pedagogical influences each teacher draws from.

In the second chapter, the five interviewed teachers explain whether or not they identify as feminist teachers and what feminist pedagogy means to them; through these discussions, each teacher uniquely positions their own pedagogy and understanding of self. For

instance, two of the five teachers agreed to identifying as feminist teachers, whereas the other three offered qualifications: a few of them understood feminism as a larger epistemological frame, one thought of feminism as an activist agenda that informed her labor as a teacher, and one understood feminism as one of several theoretical influences on her teaching. This diversity of understandings of feminism and feminist pedagogy begins to suggest that individual conceptions and knowledges about pedagogy are uniquely situated, specific, and likely to lead to enacting pedagogy in different ways.

Additionally, while many of their responses share an interest in identity differences and a belief that feminism informs their sense of identity as teachers, their explanations of feminist pedagogy also dramatically highlighted the different academic spaces and contexts that fostered their feminist teaching practices; specifically, Deborah named bell hooks and Adrienne Rich; Leah named queer studies, women and gender studies, black feminist thought and her backgrounds in peer counseling and writing center work; and, Elizabeth named cultural studies, her high school teachers who were using process-oriented writing assignments, and the influence of Patricia Sullivan and James Berlin as teachers. Gloria focused on the pedagogical influence and constraints of her institutional position as an ABD graduate student teaching in a new institution, the departmental culture and politics, and her negotiation of this position. These teachers' articulations of feminist pedagogy suggest that feminist pedagogy is culled together from a lifetime of pedagogical resources that have unique genealogies and touchstones: other teachers, specific writers and theorists, academic research and disciplines, and academic and other work-based experiences. There are certainly strands that link their feminist pedagogies together, yet each is also distinct in how it is situated and defined.

In the opening of Chapter 2, I situate these teachers' reflections in relation to David Gold's argument that pedagogies are heterogeneous and inconsistent, aspects of pedagogy he understands as strengths. Through reflecting on their network of pedagogical influences and the historical and scholarly influences on writing assignments, I would add that these pedagogical specificities are more than just pedagogical strengths in the classroom, they are also useful distinctions for understanding and defining pedagogy and teaching identities. These specificities and pedagogical locations help us define and distinguish our own identities as teachers, researchers, activists and people.

Observation: Pedagogy can be enacted through relationships in the classroom, teaching presence, curriculum, specific classroom activities and approaches to writing, and writing assignments, among other classroom (and non-classroom) spaces and sites. The writing assignment represents only one piece of this larger network of pedagogical activity in the writing classroom; nonetheless, the writing assignment is a text that has the power to influence students' thinking, writing, and understanding of what is possible. Thus, it is a site worthy of pedagogical attention.

Perhaps this observation is more of a caveat that I came to through the project. Starting from Anis Bawarshi's claims that writing assignments, classroom genres, and indeed all genres position students in particular roles and carry ideologies and assumptions, I wanted to focus on writing assignments and how they function on this theoretical and textual level. However, the interviews with the five teachers, in Chapter 2, made it clear that the writing assignment is hard to isolate in conversations about pedagogy. While I asked the teachers questions about their assignment design, translations of their pedagogy to their assignments, and what assumptions they thought their assignments might carry, I found that most of the time they struggled to focus in on their assignments. One teacher talked about her pedagogy as an epistemology that informs even how she talks to her neighbor about politics and the world. Several of the five

teachers noted significant classroom discussions during particular units, their work one-on-one with students in conferences, or their written feedback on student writing as significant pedagogical moments. Through their discussions of pedagogy, I found two things: first, pedagogy occurs in a variety of classroom and non-classroom spaces that are all significant for how we understand our work as teachers; and second, while I would argue the writing assignment text is nonetheless a significant space for pedagogy, it's not a space teachers always associate with pedagogy.

Thus, this observation notes both a limitation to this study and an argument I'm hoping to forward. Focusing on just the writing assignment text as a pedagogical site with classroom influence is limiting as there is the danger of over-estimating the significance of the writing assignment; the writing assignment is only one pedagogical classroom site that influences students. However, given the work of Bawarshi and rhetorical genre studies, part of my work in this dissertation is arguing that more pedagogical attention to writing assignments is necessary and valuable. One of my biggest findings, from both Chapter 3 and 4, is that writing assignments don't always do the pedagogical work teachers hope they will do. In Chapter 3, 62% (45/73) of the writing assignments contained feminist epistemologies or ideologies. Supporting the 38% that didn't, in Chapter 4, despite my own best intentions, the research writing assignment I designed also didn't contain feminist epistemologies. I'm not suggesting that these writing assignments failed by not explicitly being connected to feminist pedagogy; however, I am suggesting that there were some missed opportunities. These are assignments that might have more consciously encouraged students to re-imagine the subject at hand, their understanding of the world or how knowledge is produced, or their own roles as writers and

people in the world; this is the sometimes political, sometimes ethical, and certainly always value-based re-orientations that pedagogy offers when applied directly to writing assignment texts.

2 | The Character of Feminist Writing Assignments

Observation: Assignments do not need to emphasize explicit feminist content in order to be feminist. They can be grounded in feminist epistemologies, terms or concepts, feminist theorists or writers, feminist methods or practices, or a number of other smaller and more theoretical ways.

This observation and, indeed, part of the inspiration for this project really comes from Laura Micciche's claims in her chapter in *Rhetorica in Motion*, "Writing as Feminist Rhetorical Theory." Several of the dissertation chapters circle around and return to Micciche's argument that feminist writing assignments don't have to be bound by explicit feminist content, but rather they can embody "feminist thinking" and "ways of *doing* feminist rhetorics" (184). Micciche, as the verb *doing* suggests, is interested in writing modes and tasks that forward feminist projects and politics. Combining her claim with Bawarshi's claim about assignments as genres, I have looked more broadly at how assignments can do this as texts.

The findings from both the history of feminist writing assignments, in Chapter 1, and the study of collected assignments, in Chapter 3, most explicitly illustrate the variety of approaches to feminist writing assignments. In Chapter 3, only 37% of the collected assignments focus on explicit feminist content. The 62% of assignments that contain feminist epistemologies or ideologies includes those with both explicit feminist content and those without; thus, 25% of the collected assignments do not contain explicit feminist content, and yet, they still contain feminist epistemologies or assumptions. While this number may seem like a small percentage,

these assignments establish a rich and interesting array of ways of connecting “feminist thinking” to assignment texts in meaningful ways—as do the assignments that focus on feminist content.

The rhetorical genre studies framework I used to analyze assignments provides a very precise theoretical set of ways assignments forward pedagogy: through the positioning of students (subjectivities) and the values, assumptions and implied arguments of an assignment. Thus, feminist pedagogy can surface in the ways students are addressed and the underlying arguments and ideologies in an assignment text. This theoretical framework is useful for studying and designing assignments with an attention to pedagogical values; however, another way to concretely locate feminist pedagogical values in writing assignment texts is to name the textual locations. Specifically, feminist pedagogical values might appear in assignment descriptions, examples, heuristic questions, assessment criteria, epigraphs, or other sections or features of a writing assignment.

Through the rhetorical genre studies framework, one example of an assignment that makes implied feminist arguments is a set of smaller writing exercises, for the first unit of a first year writing class, called the “Representations Assignment Sequence.” In this sequence, students are asked to: write about their experiences with writing; select 3 objects that represent something about themselves as writers and people; select a piece of music that communicates something about themselves; and then, write about the process of representing the self with objects and music. The assignment opens with the following framing statement:

Identity is a process of construction. Identity is a process of communication in which we write ourselves (figuratively) and literally (using words and writing technologies). Identity as a process of communication and writing almost always involves the entwined modes of visual and verbal. In this assignment sequence, writers focus on the interplay of the visual

and the verbal in the communicative act by constructing and communicating a representation of themselves to their classmates. How do we choose the details that communicate our meaning? How do those details represent meaning? How do visual and verbal work together to communicate meaning?

In this assignment's opening statement, the argument being made is that identity is a construction, one that is intertwined with our communications. The writing activities (selecting objects and music) imply that we do have some control over how our identity is constructed through the choices we make and how we communicate, verbally and visually with others; however, our identity is also an ongoing construction that we make daily through choices about clothing, music, texts read, things carried, etc. On the one hand, this assignment is not explicitly about feminist issues, readings, or ideas. On the other, the assignment orients students to a longstanding feminist perspective on identity as it relates to communications, representation and agency.

Another quick example of a writing assignment that uses "feminist thinking" in a rather small way is one from a grant writing course. Most of the grant writing course assignments are fairly straight forward work to prepare students for writing a grant and seem far removed from feminist aims or arguments. However, on the first draft of the grant assignment, there is a list of example grant projects that are intended to suggest how students need to tailor the language of their grant application to the specific target audience. In these examples, however, there is an implied suggestion regarding what types of grant projects are valuable. Here is the exact list of 3 examples from the assignment:

- If your project has to do with erosion, and your funder talks about soil conservation- then you should talk about soil conservation as well.

- If your funder talks about teen pregnancy and your project deals with unwed single mothers in high school, then you should probably talk about it in terms of teen pregnancy!
- If your funder is interested in the education system and children's learning and your project is about creating an anti-bullying curriculum, then you should talk about how bullying impacts children's ability to learn.

While none of the examples are explicitly feminist, they are all, nonetheless, oriented around social justice issues that advocate for a better environment, better conditions, and better systems. This is a really small moment in an assignment that carries some ethical and political assumptions about the types of projects that are valuable. I think this assignment location, i.e., examples, is a really interesting way to disrupt normalized perspectives regarding grant writing or other more professional-oriented writing projects.

In “A History of Feminist Writing Assignments,” Chapter 1, my analysis is less textual, as many of the writing assignments scholars share are simply summarized rather than shared classroom documents; nonetheless, many of the assignments are not actually about explicit feminist content or issues, but rather scholars connect their feminist interests, politics and values to writing assignments. For example, the previously noted early writing prompts about students’ writing blocks, processes, and situated struggles (Annas; Daumer & Runzo; Howe) only connect to feminist pedagogy through the scholars’ argument that these writing exercises help female students to develop a voice and become aware of the sexism and other social, economic, and material factors influencing their writing.

Another historical example is the variety of journal assignments Chapter 1 explores. Scholars like Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald (1998) and Margaret Lindgren have offered general reading response or writing/research process journals, and others have offered more specific

journaling assignments, like Donna Perry (focused on the roles students play in various parts of their lives) and Alice Freed (journaling instances of sexist language). While Freed's journal on sexist language is clearly about feminist language issues, the other examples are less explicitly feminist in topic; as with the process writing exercises, these assignments connect to feminist pedagogy in the scholarship through each scholar's articulation of why these assignments forward feminist interests and pedagogy. Many of the journal assignments, for instance, advocate for critically interrogating the boundaries between academic work and non-academic life experiences. As Ritchie and Ronald use journaling within a Women and Gender Studies course, their journaling assignment becomes a richer record of the evolution of students' thinking, complicating the essentialist/constructivist binary debate. These assignments offer varying degrees of connection to feminist pedagogy—likely more if the classroom contexts and other pedagogical spaces are considered; however, most of the time, it is the author's articulation of how the assignment forwards a particular feminist ethical, political, or ideological investment that is the main way we would identify such assignments as feminist.

The point gained from these examples is that writing assignments can connect to feminist pedagogy and feminist politics through a variety of methods, only one of which is explicit feminist content or a statement connected to feminist ideology, politics or ethics. In the epigraph, which comes from Gary Tate et al.'s introduction to the second edition of *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, the authors claim that pedagogy is theoretical. They say, "It is in the conscious attention to worldview and goals that teaching becomes pedagogy" (4). I think of these examples of writing assignments that are feminist, without explicit feminist content, as enactments of this explanation of pedagogy. These assignments, and others studied in this

dissertation, offer small glimpses of a worldview and goals that connect to a teacher's feminist pedagogy.

3 | Why Study Writing Assignments?

Observation: rhetorical genre studies is helpful for studying writing assignments. Specifically, looking at writing assignment texts for subjectivities, arguments and ideologies is a particularly useful method for understanding the theoretical work and potential influence of an assignment text.

Only slightly less used than this project's reliance on Laura Micciche's work, the theoretical grounding of this project comes from Rhetorical Genre Studies, especially the work of Anis Bawarshi. In *Genre and the Invention of the Writer: Reconsidering the Place of Invention in Composition*, Bawarshi looks at how genres challenge us to rethink the rhetorical concept of invention. He argues that genres, as typified situations, invent the writer—by creating a subjectivity for the writer to inhabit, desires for the writer to have, actions for the writer to enact, and even values and arguments the writer must accept. As he explains,

Within material constraints, then, our social relations, subjectivities, commitments, and actions are rhetorically mediated by genres, which organize the rhetorical conditions within which we enact and reproduce our social relations, subjectivities, commitments, and actions. In this way, genres are not merely passive backdrops for our actions or simply familiar tools we use to convey or categorize information; rather, genres function more like rhetorical ecosystems, dynamic sites in which communicants rhetorically reproduce the very conditions within which they act. Within genres, therefore, our typified rhetorical practices support the very recurring conditions that subsequently make these rhetorical practices necessary and meaningful. This is why genres, far from being innocent or arbitrary conventions, are at work in rhetorically shaping and enabling not only social practices and subjectivities, but also the desires that elicit such practices and subjectivities. (82)

Bawarshi (and other rhetorical genre studies scholars) often uses examples of real world genres, like the forms one fills out waiting to be seen at the doctor's office, in order to illustrate how genres shape relationships, identities, behaviors, and actions. While these examples may

suggest that genres are problematically controlling—for instance, as the Doctor’s forms establish patients as primarily numbered bodies with mainly physical complaints to be fixed—the application of this understanding of genre seems even more risky when applied to classroom genres like the writing assignment. This perceived risk comes from the inescapable and far from neutral work that all genres do, coupled with our aim to be teachers who avoid putting students in risky situations.

While there is certainly some risk, the good news is that the writing assignment is only one classroom site that shapes students, and there are limits and differences in how much influence genres exert. More concretely, using this framework to study the collected writing assignments in Chapter 3 and my own in Chapter 4, I did not find any writing assignment texts that were overly problematic or even the slightest bit risky. Indeed, most of the writing assignment texts attempted to empower students by referencing their previous knowledge and life experiences, their expertise on a particular subject, or by giving them more control and choices (just to name a few ways). However, the risk I did locate in both of these chapters was more related to the arguments, ideologies, and assumptions genres carry that shape desires, thinking, and even world view; this risk is whether or not an assignment text—through its arguments, ideologies and assumptions—aligns and forwards feminist pedagogy or not. While assignment texts that fail to forward pedagogical connections may not sound inherently risky per say, as the epigraph notes, it is this “conscious attention to worldview and goals” that is the work of pedagogy. When understood through the rhetorical genre studies framework: since writing assignments are genres that are never neutral and shape relationships, desires, thinking and actions regardless of intent, writing assignments that are not consciously connecting to

pedagogy are both a lost opportunity and potentially shape students in ways that are less in-line with pedagogical aims and goals.

There has been quite a lot of pedagogical composition scholarship that has offered advice to teachers regarding how to develop and design writing assignments (surveyed in the introduction); however, this scholarship looks more at the basic elements of assignments that are necessary for their construction and also for developing creative and engaging assignments. Far less scholarship has tackled how to understand writing assignments as texts that function on a theoretical level to shape student thinking, writing, and perspectives. Thus, the value of this rhetorical genre studies framework is that it offers teachers a unique way to self-assess writing assignments and design them (more on designing in the second half of this chapter) that gets at the more theoretical workings of writing assignments—that connects pedagogical values, worldview and our roles as humans to assignment texts.

Why Pedagogically Purposeful Assignments Matter

Sometimes, feminist pedagogy is synonymous with good composition praxis. While this is good, by grounding writing assignments (even in small ways) in more explicitly feminist thinking, we have the opportunity to more visibly make writing assignment texts that consciously aim to transform students' thinking, writing, and understanding of what's possible. Additionally, through this explicit and visible connection to feminist aims, we are naming a particular genealogy and connecting to feminist politics and values.

Throughout the work presented in each of the chapters, 1 through 4, some of the findings suggest that what emerges as feminist pedagogy is simply synonymous with good composition pedagogy or praxis. Some examples of such findings include: the already examined writing process exercises or journal assignments in the feminist composition scholarship surveyed in Chapter 1; the on-going strain of helping students to challenge what they know

about the world that several of the teachers interviewed in Chapter 2 mention as feminist; the assignments that include empowering subjectivities or arguments about the construction of knowledge in Chapter 3; or, the investment in historical research and connecting students' contemporary lives and concerns to an institution's history in my own assignment in Chapter 4. Each of these pedagogical aims or assignment features could easily be situated as either feminist, or in general, simply good composition pedagogy.

First, there is overlap between feminist pedagogy and good composition pedagogy, as there is likely between all different pedagogical orientations and good composition pedagogy. The most obvious reason for this overlap comes from the discussions with the teachers in Chapter 2. As noted above, each of the teachers identified a unique network of pedagogical influences, of which feminism was only one. Thus, one of the implications of the first observation—that we all bring a unique genealogy of pedagogical influences, life experiences, and understandings of feminism into the classroom—is that there is no such thing as a homogenous, correct, or wholly feminist version of feminist pedagogy (and likewise, there is no wholly homogenous and untouched “good composition pedagogy,” either). Each individual's pedagogy is a unique blend of composition pedagogies, practices, previous teachers, versions of feminism, etc. Rather than understanding this as a flaw, I think of the richness that this insight has for pedagogy, pedagogical research, and classroom practices.

An additional reason for this overlap—or a response to questions regarding whether or not something actually counts as feminist—is that feminism itself is diverse, rhetorical and flexible. Precisely because feminism is a political movement with a rich and long history (whether or not one uses the waves metaphor) that has been taken up across numerous

academic disciplines, including rhetoric and composition, as a political ideology, a pedagogy, a research method, and as subject matter in its numerous pop culture forms, there is a lot of variance, similarities, and evolving aspects to feminism. The research from Chapters 2 and 3 in this dissertation suggests that there are both strengths and weaknesses to the flexibility of feminism. For instance, despite clearly connecting to particular historical feminist pedagogical values, many of the teachers interviewed did not see the political aspects of their feminist pedagogies or practices; de-politicizing the feminist investment in questioning identity norms or questioning how we know what we know means that we sometimes lose track of the material, economic, identity-based, social, and cultural reasons for the pedagogies we have—and thus, the purposes we have for trying to transform students’ thinking about the world. On the other hand, the flexibility of feminism is part of the basis for this study, and what allows me to suggest that feminism can inform writing assignment texts that are not about feminist content.

Despite the sometimes inherent overlap between feminist pedagogy and composition pedagogy, I’ve been advocating that writing assignment texts should be connected, even if only in small ways, to feminist pedagogy. But, getting to the point, why?

First, an easily forgotten point is that no assignments, texts, or classroom actions are neutral. James Berlin, who I have also referenced throughout, first brought our attention to the theoretical, ideological, and epistemological aspects of all pedagogies; regardless of the shift in his terms (from rhetorics to ideology and epistemology), Berlin’s work establishes the potential risks or dangers in not critically attending to how writing pedagogies and assignments offer specific perspectives on the world, how it works, or what is possible. Thus, for those writing teachers who are invested in transformative pedagogies, like feminist pedagogy, critical

attention to the enactments of pedagogy in and across classroom spaces, documents, and genres is a valuable pursuit.

Second—and following—by grounding writing assignments (even in small ways) in more explicitly feminist thinking, we have the opportunity to more visibly make writing assignment texts that consciously aim to transform students' thinking, writing, and understanding of what's possible. Throughout all of the assignments examined in this dissertation, the most interesting have been the ones that re-orient students towards a particular way of thinking about something. For instance, the way the examples of different grant projects have the potential to challenge students' understandings of the exigency for grant writing or other professional types of writing. Another example is the assignment from Chapter 3 that positioned students as a collective decision making body, one that makes decisions about both what an assignment is and how it is assessed; this position re-imagines students' role in the classroom and challenges them to a different kind of classroom engagement. Both of these assignments relied on very small infusions of feminist thinking to position students towards the world in slightly different ways than they may have been accustomed to.

And finally, through this visible connection to feminist aims, as teachers, we are naming a particular genealogy and connecting to feminist politics and values. The purpose of such a connection, as the interviews with the teachers highlight, is that it is positioning our own teaching and our identities as teachers within a particular trajectory of feminist thought, action, and values. Not every teacher may want to align visibly with feminist thinking, politics and pedagogy; however, identifying scholarly and pedagogical locations is what grounds our work and contributes to constructing our identities as teachers, researchers, and administrators.

A Model for Designing Pedagogically Purposeful Writing Assignments

The above observations and claims are the results of thinking across the different data sets studied in this dissertation—across the history of feminist writing assignments in composition scholarship, the interviews with 5 teachers, the collected writing assignments, and my own upper-division writing assignment and student reflections. Across all of these sites, the larger argument that writing assignment texts can and should be more purposefully connected to feminist pedagogy is supported. However, how do writing teachers, whether feminist or not, enact this practice in their own assignment design? If Amy Rupiper Taggart et al., in the epigraph, are right that pedagogy is purposeful attention to worldview and goals, then what does that mean for assignment design?

To conclude, I have two suggestions for all writing teachers who are aiming to create and design writing assignment texts that more visibly and purposefully connect to their pedagogies. First, I advocate for a self-reflective and visual mapping of pedagogy. And second, I offer a five-step heuristic for support in brainstorming how particular pedagogical aims and worldviews can inform and connect to writing assignments. These pedagogical strategies are not intended to be rigidly applied; but rather, they are intended to offer teachers a starting place for thinking about a connection that many (though not all) teachers in this study have noted as less conscious or more implicit work. Further research in testing these methods with other teachers and in gauging student responses and reflections on writing assignment texts would further support and validate these heuristic methods and the findings of this dissertation.

Mapping Pedagogy

In the first observation above, I claim that it's significant and beneficial that pedagogies are individual, heterogeneous, and have a wide array of disciplinary, contextual, and historical influences; this observation, however, can only function as a rich resource and insight for classroom practice if teachers are conscious of their own individual pedagogical networks. Through the work of graduate courses, developing teaching philosophies, and designing courses and classroom activities and assignments, many teachers (though not all) may certainly be aware of their pedagogies. The specific diversity of pedagogical influences that the teachers shared with me in the interviews in Chapter 2, however, suggest how complex and expansive individual pedagogical networks can be, perhaps beyond the scope of how we initially conceptualize our pedagogies. Through the interviews, many of the teachers came to new understandings of their pedagogies and classroom practices simply through the conversation of the actual interview; these new understandings through reflective conversation suggest the importance of regular conscious pedagogical reflection. By advocating for visually mapping individual pedagogies, I hope to encourage both pedagogical reflection and a richer understanding of individual pedagogical genealogies.

Since (if not before) Adrienne Rich's "A Politics of Location," feminists have valued and practiced a mapping of identities. In the opening of her famous essay, Rich reflects on her specific body ("my body") and positionalities as opposed to the theoretical preference of the abstraction "the body" (32). After reflections on her specific body, she says "To locate myself in my body means [...] recognizing this white skin, the places it has taken me, the places it has not let me go" (32). Rich's reflections on her privileges, her specific body, and the ways her

perspective has been allowed to be normalized and centered led to other feminists grounding methods sections, research, and other writings in an attention to their individual politics of location, in order to be accountable for the ways their bodies and locations have been privileged and disadvantaged in very specific and different interconnected ways. Essentially, this politics of locations has been an important way to account for the differences between and among women and feminists. The type of pedagogical mapping that I'm advocating for has similar possibilities in terms of noticing ways that we privilege certain pedagogies and knowledges; but perhaps more important to this pedagogical mapping is the same self-reflexive element that Rich enacts. The purpose is both better knowledge of our teaching identities and the ability to use or change those identities.

In their 2000 CCC article, "Institutional Critique: A Rhetorical Methodology for Change," James Porter, Patricia Sullivan, Stuart Blythe, Jeffrey Grabill, and Libby Miles argue for the value of using postmodern mapping, from cultural geography, as one means of enacting their methodology of institutional critique. Their purpose is both different and similar to my pedagogical one: they are hoping to ground abstract theories that aim at important global or macro level changes by advocating for situating and spatializing change within the specific material, economic, and rhetorical constraints of a particular institution. My aim in suggesting pedagogical mapping is similar, as I believe visually diagramming pedagogies can help concretely bridge and locate the specificity and richness of individual pedagogies in ways that can inform classroom practices and assignments. Porter et al. explain the value of mapping as the

...play among a number of elements: the uniqueness of a particular map playing against the global quality of the types of elements such a map normally includes; the static

quality of a particular map playing against the dynamism it gains through comparison with other maps, other historical renderings, and other symbols standing for the space; the theoretical allegiances of certain mappings playing against the evidence of such relationships; the relationships depicted playing against the ones unvoiced. Yes, this type of approach emphasizes how space is both constructed and inhabited, designed to achieve certain purposes (and not others). (623)

When considered in pedagogical terms, Porter et al.'s understanding of mapping can help teachers to locate consistent scholarly homes, visible absences of important pedagogical areas that could be more influential, and a more conscious attention to what pedagogical areas one is drawing from for classroom practices as opposed to less utilized pedagogical influences. As pedagogies are heterogeneous, individual and dynamic, mapping is a means of visualizing and understanding that richness, being able to access a wider variety of it, and changing and evolving when necessary or desired.

Mapping pedagogies can easily be accomplished by simply drawing or by using any number of digital programs or platforms for visualizations. In my own pedagogical diagram below, I used a free trial of Scapple³⁹. While the task of mapping pedagogy may seem daunting, this self-reflexive work can be begun through a consideration of the following questions:

- What scholarship in rhetoric and composition and across the disciplines informs my teaching?
- What personal histories with feminism, literacy learning, and education inform my teaching?
- What personal non-educational histories, experiences, and relationships inform my teaching?
- What political, activist, or value-based aims inform my teaching? Where did these come from (people, texts, events, etc.)?

While some of the answers to these questions may shift and change over time, understanding our individual network of pedagogical influences is useful for developing teaching philosophies,

³⁹ <https://www.literatureandlatte.com/scapple.php>

classroom practices, activities, and assignments, and for considering new pedagogical perspectives and scholarship. This type of visual pedagogical mapping would be especially useful before writing and during revisions of a teaching philosophy. In addition, the activity is useful for graduate students in pedagogy seminars and for all teachers (at any stage in their career) through teacher-training or professional development workshops and events both within departments and across the curriculum.

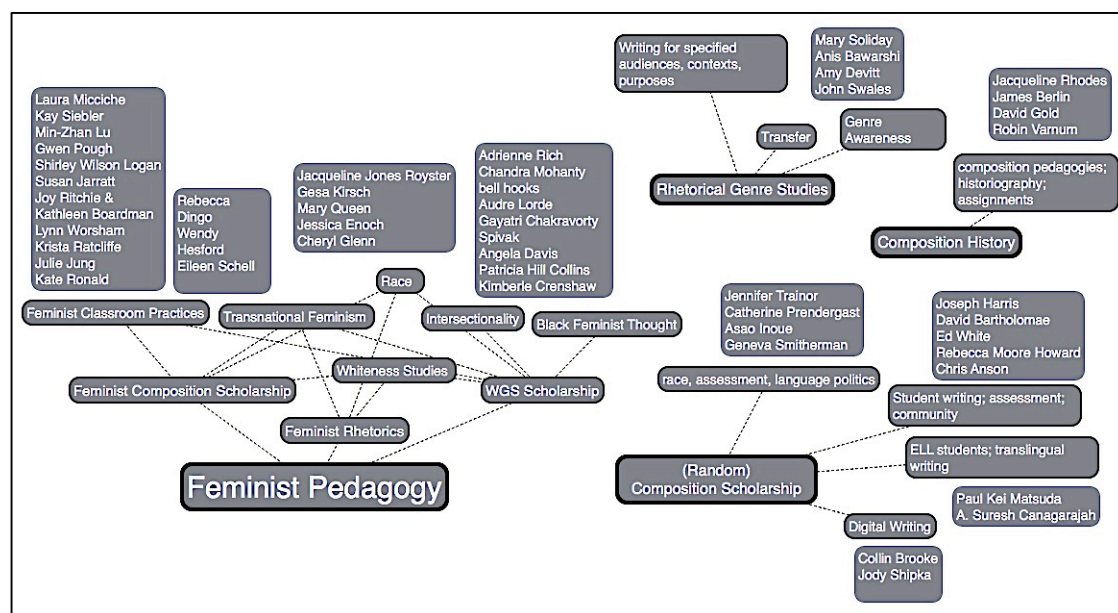


Figure 6
Personal Pedagogy Map from September 2015

This type of a mapping exercise could potentially be endless; as we read, engage with other scholars at conferences and through publications, we are always expanding the scope of our disciplinary influences. In order to avoid being completely overwhelmed by the mapping exercise, I attempted to really think about research areas that were influential touchstones for

me: specific scholars, articles, books, and concepts that I consistently reference and come back to again and again. For instance, in my map above, I could have developed any number of important references from composition studies, like previous scholarship on writing processes, on revision, recent work on writing about writing, or more from digital writing and research. These are all areas that I do think about and use. However, I tried to really stick to scholars and concepts that readily come to mind and I use in my thinking and writing often. In order to accomplish the mapping exercise, there is a necessary balance between the coverage of one's pedagogical network and the specific scholars and areas that are actually named as touchstones. In other words, for the map to be effective, there must be a way of limiting and refining the references while also achieving a representative scope of important areas of the discipline.

There are some obvious limitations, as just noted, to mapping pedagogy. While a pedagogical map is intended to show complexity, it cannot name every important influence. In fact, there are likely some influences of which we are unaware. However, a pedagogical map is useful if it is understood as a limited map that is contextual and situated within a particular time. In other words, the above map is representative of my pedagogical influences at this particular moment in my teaching, scholarship, and thinking. At the close of my dissertation, this map is highly immersed in scholarship, an aspect that may shift or change in the future, and less in personal connections and relationships; this aspect of my map is representative of the context of finishing a dissertation and going on the job market. When understood through this contextual and time-based lens, however, the pedagogical map offers useful insights for designing assignments and activities, seeking pedagogical growth in different research areas,

and for considering which areas I draw from more or less. A pedagogical map is a method for reflection on our pedagogical philosophies, which should inform choices about teaching.

Designing Pedagogically-Purposeful Writing Assignments: A Heuristic

Throughout this dissertation, especially in Chapters 2-4, I found that translating pedagogy into assignments was a complex and messy process that was more or less conscious for different teachers. While this translation isn't usually automatic, I believe that part of the difficulty is simply the lack of conscious and explicit attention that has been directed to the task. I'm offering a fairly straightforward, five-step heuristic process for more consciously and purposefully translating pedagogy into writing assignment texts; I advocate for this heuristic as a part of a larger assignment workshop for professional development for teachers. The process the heuristic offers does not necessarily make the translation process any less challenging of a task, but rather, it simply makes visible the steps in the process.

The process itself is fairly direct. In the workshop heuristic at the end of this chapter, Steps 1-4 ask teachers to identify different aspects of their pedagogy, contexts, and assignment that should influence the design of the assignment. Then, Step 5 asks teachers to locate particular moments and places in their assignment in which they might infuse or draw attention to their pedagogical values. Perhaps most significant and challenging is Step 2, which asks teachers to attempt to identify and describe their pedagogy's epistemology. Wrapped up in epistemology is how a pedagogy positions and defines students, the value and work of the writing classroom, how knowledge is produced, and what is possible for students in the world. These epistemological aspects of pedagogy are what offer students ways of re-imagining

writing, their role as students, the subject matter, and how they engage with the world around them; thus, identifying the epistemological aspects of pedagogy is part of the work of connecting pedagogy to assignments in meaningful ways. While epistemology may be more easily identified in pedagogies, assignments and activities after they have been designed, I believe a more conscious attention to epistemology in pedagogy prior to assignment design or for revising assignments can be a transformative and a valuable practice.

As an intervention, this type of assignment workshop can be offered by WPAs as a means of either developing new writing assignments or revising old or programmatically shared assignments. The workshop can be utilized differently to meet the needs and purposes of diverse institutional audiences and contexts, including: for professional development for writing teachers (adjuncts or lecturers); for new TA training initiatives that are encouraging TAs to consider pedagogy as informing classroom practices; for larger programmatic development around shared curriculums and assignments; and, for larger writing across the curriculum professional development with faculty and teachers working to develop better writing assignments. Indeed, after presenting on the rhetorical genre studies framework (see Chapter 3) as a method of reflecting on assignments at the National Women Studies Association's annual conference in 2015, one audience member asked for permission to share my materials in her role as a coordinator for her institution's faculty development initiative on diversity and fostering inclusive practices in the classroom; thus, this type of pedagogical project is valuable for a variety of university audiences and purposes.

Often, whether for internal departmental or writing across the curriculum writing-based campus workshops, there is a strong emphasis on simply making sure that writing assignments

do the basics: establish the rhetorical situation for students, clearly articulate the writing goals, address evaluation criteria, and emphasize the significance of the development of ideas in student writing (over mechanics and formatting). These types of WAC outreach efforts that emphasize what Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle have framed as the threshold concepts of writing studies are necessary and useful professional development; indeed, the assignment workshop that I have designed can and should be paired with more fundamental writing studies concepts and the basics of assignment design (when appropriate). However, by eliminating the pedagogical aspect of assignment design, professional development workshops risk establishing writing assignments as classroom texts that are formulaic and less significant for student learning and writing. I would, thus, advocate for writing assignment workshops that merge a consideration of the fundamental elements of good assignment design with the more pedagogical and theoretical work of writing assignments.

As assignments are rhetorical and contextual documents that are grounded in specific institutions, teachers may feel their assignments are constrained by departmental learning objectives or even required curriculums and shared writing assignments. The heuristic workshop that I'm advocating (and that's shared in full below), however, starts with these immediate concerns and can be used to modify and individualize a shared curriculum. Steps 3 and 4 of the heuristic ask teachers to list their varying contexts, including departmental learning objectives, student populations, institutional objectives and initiatives, writing goals from composition theory, and any additional contextual information that necessarily informs and helps construct any assignment; regardless of institutional position, this contextual

information and writing and learning goals frame and inform all classroom assignments, activities, and larger curricular plans.

In the case of a shared curriculum, however, with assignments that are used and shared by a larger group of teachers, this heuristic workshop can still be used as a means of helping teachers more thoughtfully and reflectively analyze assignment texts in connection with individual pedagogies. As Chapter 3 highlights, pedagogy is enacted in writing assignment texts in very small, discrete moments—in how students are addressed, implied arguments, example topics, and heuristic questions, for example—and thus, shared assignments can be improved through small revisions and an attention to the theoretical dimensions of the text. These workshops could be used to start conversations around making assignments more inclusive, more transformative, and more engaging for students; conversations that are likely to be engaging for participants and to offer improvements on central shared assignments. Additionally, this type of assignment workshop highlights that individual teachers are responsible for their pedagogies—for ensuring that classroom documents, activities and assignments are pedagogically motivated and enacted.

Ideally, the below assignment heuristic is a way of building a connection between pedagogy as a theory and writing assignments as classroom practice. More than just ensuring individual teachers are thinking pedagogically, however, building pedagogy into assignment workshops is an effort towards a larger shift towards being more pedagogically-conscious as a community of teachers. More often than not, assignment design is based more materially on departmental learning objectives, course descriptions, and perhaps some exciting new trends or ideas from composition scholarship, friends, or conferences. This heuristic and dissertation

advocate for a more purposeful inclusion of pedagogy in writing assignment design, something that hopefully spins off into a more purposefully pedagogical community of teachers.

Assignment Praxis

A heuristic guide to translating pedagogical values and commitments into the concrete text of your assignments.

Step 1

Naming Your Pedagogical Values. List as many as you think of, then rank them to reflect their priority.

Step 2

Identify your pedagogy's epistemology. Consider how your pedagogy defines students, the value of classroom work, how knowledge is produced, and what is possible in the world. For instance, does your pedagogy value knowledge from personal experiences and histories, from observational research, or from reading secondary sources? Does knowledge exist and need to be located? Is it constructed? Is it rhetorical? And, how does your pedagogy position writing and students' writing in relation to the world? What does your pedagogy assume about who students are, what they can do, and what they want to do?

Step 3

Identifying Contextual Commitments. With a particular course in mind, name department curricular outcomes, objectives, relevant information about your student population, and any other pertinent contextual information that will influence your assignment's design.

Step 4

Naming Assignment Goals. Choose a particular assignment to work with for this exercise. What are your goals? You might consider: what writerly practices should students develop? What kinds of tools and resources will students have available? What are the compositional processes and outcomes your assignment will feature? Name any relevant aspect of the assignment that might affect how your pedagogical values will be put into praxis.

Step 5

Putting Values into Praxis. Consider the parts of a typical assignment (listed below), and begin to consider where particular pedagogical commitments might be explicitly communicated. Your values may be communicated through direct statement, through the kinds of heuristic questions you pose, the texts you ask students to work with, or through the particular task you ask them to complete.

Next, choose a value, and consider where it might be made explicit, via naming, task, positioning of students, etc. How might you articulate your assignment's background, the students' task, or heuristic questions, given that particular value? For instance, if your chosen value is collaborative writing, you may consider where there is space for collaborative writing in the students' task and how you place assessment value on it. If your value is empowering students, you might consider how you address them in the assignment and whether or not you can give them any control over assessment, assignment design, or genre, etc. If your value is the inclusion of historically Othered voices, you might choose a more representative selection of assigned readings or framing quotations, encourage students to be accountable to the identity of authors they include in their research, or use a key concept around identity and issues of inclusion as a key part of the assignment. If your selected value concerns finding ways for students of varying abilities to access the assignment, you might consider alternate ways that the assignment can be produced.

Assignment Parts:

- Description of Task
- Required Texts
- Background/Theoretical Frames
- Writing Situation (audience, purpose, context)
- Positioning of Students
- Heuristic Questions
- Examples
- Assessment Criteria/Guidelines/Learning Goals

The End

Ultimately, the purpose of writing assignments is to foster student literacies. In this dissertation, I may be charged with over-emphasizing the role of the actual text of a writing assignment in shaping student literacies. In addition to the ways in which assignments function as a genre though, I would also add that writing assignments are important classroom texts because they are controllable, visible contracts that lay the ground work for student literacies, classroom discussions, and what happens after. Assignments function as reminders to teachers of the ways in which we hope to encourage students, to frame topics, to address students, and to foster a sense of play and freedom. Assignments also function for students as guideposts to be brought to the writing center, to read a teacher's strictness in, to study for invention purposes, and to know the allowable freedom and possibilities of the task. Given the theoretical and practical significance of writing assignments as texts, it follows that they should be informed by and textually connected to a teacher's pedagogy—or "conscious attention to worldview and goals" (Amy Rupiper Taggart et al. 4). For feminist teachers and others invested in transformative teaching, I believe that the writing assignment is an under-utilized site that needs further pedagogical attention.

APPENDIX A | A Bibliography of Feminist Writing Assignments

Below is a chronological bibliography of all of the Feminist Composition scholarship that I surveyed for this literature review that references a writing assignment. Dates in orange are the original publication dates.

Texts Cross-Referenced Below:

- Caywood, Cynthia L., and Gillian R. Overing, eds. *Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, Gender, and Equity*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987.
- Jarratt, Susan C., and Lynn Worsham, eds. *Feminism and Composition Studies: In Other Words*. New York: MLA, 1998.
- Kirsch, Gesa E., et al., eds. *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's and NCTE, 2003.
- Ronald, Kate and Joy Ritchie, eds. *Teaching Rhetorica: Theory, Pedagogy, Practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 2006.
- Schell, Eileen E. and K.J. Rawson, eds. *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.

1970-1989

- Howe, Florence. "Identity and Expression: A Writing Course for Women." Kirsch et al. 33-42. 1971
- Hiatt, Mary P. "The Feminine Style: Theory and Fact." Kirsch et al. 43-8. 1978
- Bolker, Joan. "Teaching Griselda to Write." Kirsch et al. 49-52. 1979
- Annas, Pamela J. "Writing As Women." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 12.1 (1984): 38-9.
- Annas, Pamela J. "Style as Politics: A Feminist Approach to the Teaching of Writing." Kirsch et al. 61-72. 1985
- Annas, Pamela J. "Silences: Feminist Language Research and the Teaching of Writing." Caywood and Overing. 3-17. 1987
- Blevins Faery, Rebecca. "Women and Writing Across the Curriculum: Learning and Liberation." Pages. 1987
- Daumer, Elisabeth, and Sandra Runzo. "Transforming the Composition Classroom." Caywood and Overing. 45-62. 1987
- DeShazer, Mary. "Creation and Relation: Teaching Essays by T.S. Eliot and Adrienne Rich." 113-22. 1987
- Freed, Alice. "Hearing is Believing: The Effect of Sexist Language on Language Skills." Caywood and Overing. 81-89. 1987
- Pearlman, Mickey. "How I Would Liberate My Mother." Caywood and Overing. 165-8. 1987
- Perry, Donna. "Making Journal Writing Matter." Caywood and Overing. 151-6. 1987
- Radner, Susan. "Writing About Families: How to Apply Feminism to a Traditional Writing Syllabus." Caywood and Overing. 161-4. 1987

- Riemer, James. "Becoming Gender Conscious: Writing About Sex Roles in a Composition Course." Caywood and Overing. 157-60. 1987
- Flynn, Elizabeth A. "Composing as a Woman." Kirsch et al. 243-55. 1988

1990-1999

- Ritchie, Joy S. "Confronting the 'Essential' Problem: Reconnecting Feminist Theory and Pedagogy." Kirsch et al. 79-102. 1990
- Lamb, Catherine E. "Beyond Argument in Feminist Composition." Kirsch et al. 281- 93. 1991
- Bridwell-Bowles, Lillian. "Discourse and Diversity: Experimental Writing Within the Academy." Kirsch et al. 294-313. 1992
- Eichhorn, Jill et al. "A Symposium on Feminist Experiences in the Composition Classroom." Kirsch et al. 363-387. 1992 [especially, Karen Powers-Stubbs' "Watching Ourselves: Feminist Teachers and Authority" (376-80)]
- Payne, Michelle. "Rend(er)ing Women's Authority in the Writing Classroom." Kirsch et al. 398-410. 1994
- Lu, Min-Zhan. "Reading and Writing Differences: The Problematic of Experience." Kirsch et al. 436-46. 1998
- Wilson Logan, Shirley. "'When and Where I Enter': Race, Gender, and Composition Studies." Kirsch et al. 425-35. 1998
- Ritchie, Joy, and Kate Ronald. "Riding Long Coattails, Subverting Tradition: The Tricky Business of Feminists Teaching Rhetoric(s)." Jarratt and Worsham. 217-38. 1998
- Lindgren, Margaret. "From Principles to Particulars (and Back)." Jarratt and Worsham. 321-28. 1998.
- Hesford, Wendy. *Framing Identities: Autobiography and the Politics of Pedagogy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- LeCourt, Donna, and Luann Barnes. "Writing Multiplicity: Hypertext and Feminist Textual Politics." Kirsch et al. 321-338. 1999

2000—today

- Middleton, Joyce Irene. "Toni Morrison and 'Race Matters' Rhetoric: Reading Race and Whiteness in Visual Culture." *Calling Cards: Theory and Practice in the Study of Race, Gender, and Culture*. Eds. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Ann Marie Mann Simpkins. Albany: State University of New York Press, 243-53. 2005.
- Jung, Julie. *Revisionary Rhetoric, Feminist Pedagogy, and Multigenre Texts*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press and CCCC (NCTE), 2005.
- Daniell, Beth. "Dissoi Logoi: Women's Rhetoric and Classroom Practice." Ronald and Ritchie, 82-92. 2006.
- Helmets, Marguerite. "Objects, Memory, and Narrative: New Notes Toward Materialist Rhetoric." Ronald and Ritchie, 114-30. 2006.
- Pough, Gwendolyn. "'Each One, Pull One': Womanist Rhetoric and Black Feminist Pedagogy in the Writing Classroom." Ronald and Ritchie, 66-81. 2006.

- Ratcliffe, Krista. "Coming Out: Or, How Adrienne Rich's Feminist Theory Complicates Intersections of Rhetoric and Composition Studies, Cultural Studies, and Writing Program Administration." Ronald and Ritchie, 31-47. 2006.
- Schell, Eileen. "Gender, Rhetorics, and Globalization: Rethinking the Spaces and Locations of Women's Rhetorics in Our Field." Ronald and Ritchie, 160-73. 2006.
- Micciche, Laura. "Writing as Feminist Rhetorical Theory." *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*. Eds. Eileen E. Schell and K.J. Rawson. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 173-88. 2010.
- Wolters Hinshaw, Wendy. "Making Ourselves Vulnerable: A Feminist Pedagogy of Listening." *Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts*. Eds. Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 264-77. 2011.

APPENDIX B | Feminist Writing Assignment Corpus

Below is a chart that provides a glimpse at the entire corpus of writing assignments that this chapter analyzed. In this chart, the assignments are arranged by course level.

Course Level & Assignment Title/Description	Course Titles	Contribution: Syllabus, Assignments, or Both
100 Level (100s or FYC) Courses		
WRT 104 (summer) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Semester Journal "This I believe," Educational Philosophy Critical Response (to 1 shared text), Multimodal Group Project (5-7 min. video of advice to incoming students) 	Introduction to College-Level Writing: The Politics of Education	Both
WRT 100 (summer) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Essay (This I believe as a student) Oral Presentation (revised personal essay) Study of Place: My City, My History (description, history, reflection about building) Slideshow documentary of building (using PP) 	Intro to College Writing Theme seems to be students' lives—as students and in a particular city	Syllabus
ENG 105.03 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Literary Analysis (5 pgs; use one text read in class) 	Intro to Narrative	Both
ENG 101 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Ethnography: study of students' own academic discipline using interview, field observations, scholarly essays, personal reflection (Essay #4) 	Introductory Writing (nothing on course content)	Both
ENG 1001 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Representations Assignment Sequence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select 3 objects that communicate something about you 	College Writing I Topic: identity, representations, literacy	Assignments

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a piece of music that does the same • Write a 1,000 word reflection on the process of representing yourself without words • Conference & revise <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Autobiography (literacy narrative), 3. Literacy Biography (research literacy of someone else) 4. Reflection on Autobiography & Biography (writing process) 5. Portfolio 		
University Writing 1020 (FYW requirement) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coming to Terms (1 text: Joan Scott's "Politics of the Veil", includes revisions) 2. Research Paper (no topic mentioned) 	Writing Global Women's Lives	Both
HUMW 011-31 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "I hate that Song Podcast": An inquiry into personal taste (listening, research song, personal reflections on taste and process) 	Composing Experience Topics: personal experience, identity, representation	Both
ENG 100 (FYW requirement) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self Portrait Adaptation (literacy narrative) for new audience 2. Email to Audience Sequence 3. Rhetorical Analysis of Remix Writing Process 	College Writing	Both
FYW (without course, contributed from presentation) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "The Sounding Pittsburgh Project": fieldwork, select representative sound, blog with sounds and pictures, class soundscape 2. Experimental Analysis of Sonic Product: Locate a sonic product w a team, analysis paper of experience of product, present it 3. Design & Compose a Sonic Product (team): brainstorm, physically construct prototype, revise, 	Sound Composing	Assignments

advertise it, present it		
ENGCOMP 0203 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arguments Against & About Love: Rhetorical Analysis of Kipnis and hooks works) 2. Rhetorics of Courtship: Analyze gendered rhetoric of courtship in a cultural text using Bates & Burke 3. Rhetorical Education for Romantic Education: Analyze 2 contemporary pedagogical romantic guides 4. Instructional Podcast (1 min; instructions about love/romance/identity/etc. that interrogate cultural norms for romance in the style of Kincaid's "Girl") 	Seminar in Composition: Gender Studies Topic: Romance, Gender, Sexuality	Both, Partial syllabus
200 Level Courses		
ENG 21011 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflective Essay (Final assignment; reflection on course research & experience—research that matters) 	College Writing 2 (Focus on research)	Both
ENG 250 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary/Definition: digital poster to define a technology 2. Rhetorical Analysis of a website (3-4pgs; no mention of what kind of website) 3. Researched Public Debate (tech-related, 1750 words; the debate is a researched (10 sources) conversation/dialogue-debate between three people offering different perspectives on topic) & Reflective Memo (250 words on process) 4. Group Audio Public Service Announcement: translation of 1 member's debate into 3 1 minute PSAs directed at different audiences—using audacity to create a sound recording 	Multimodality, technology, & communication/writing	Both
ENG 220	The short story as genre:	Both

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Final Project has 4 options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Word Cloud & Paper discussion Short story remix & Reflection essay 3: using the online short story "The Rapper" Traditional Essay Final: graded 1 hour discussion of course & writing 	Women of Color Across the African Diaspora	
<p>WRT 205</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Defining Our Terms, Locating Ourselves: defining globalization as a definition and research area essay Tracing Networks, Speaking Back: researched argument that responds to a contemporary global issue—5 scholarly, 5 non-scholarly sources Curating Networks, Posing Questions: three curation options—an infographic, a storify, or an annotated bib Righteous Remix: Stepping into Public Networks—a 10 minute video to SU audience on their global issue of choice 	Researching Global Networks	Both
<p>Intermediate Writing 2070</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Agency Profile Report (rhetorical situation of the community agency they are working with) Service Learning Reflective Essay (4-5 pgs—reflections on self as citizen, on community partnership, and literacies 	<p>Intermediate Writing, Literacies & Place: Personal, Professional, & Communal</p> <p>A Service Learning Course</p>	Both
Upper Division		
<p>Dream Course: Pre-reqs Noted: pass FYC, recommended intermediate writing class pass, too</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Failure Archive & Analysis (collection of examples of failure and reflection on what the archives says about failure) Final Project (3 options): 	Topics in Rhetoric: #Fail	Syllabus

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure Case Study: primary & secondary research on how an individual, community, organization, etc. deals with failure • Novice Narrative: weeks-long project trying a new thing, documenting learning and failing process, reflection on that experience • Failure Archive Expanded: 		
<p>COMM 323</p> <p>1. Film Analysis: apply 1 course concept to a film</p>	Speech Communication: Gender & Communication	Both syllabus & 1 assignment overview from website
<p>ENG 350</p> <p>1. Practicing Rhetorical Criticism: using Feminist or Neo-Aristotelian method to analyze a rhetorical artifact</p>	<p>Rhetorical Foundations</p> <p>Focus: identity and constructions of truth</p>	Both
<p>ENG 30663.30</p> <p>1. Personal Theory Essay (connect experience to readings)</p> <p>2. Rhetorical Context Presentation & Report: context about 1 woman rhetor from reading list</p> <p>3. Rhetorical Analysis Project: study a contemporary woman rhetor (paper & presentation)</p>	Women's Rhetors	Both
<p>COM/WGS/SOL 4424</p> <p>1. Education & Gender Analysis: 3-5pgs. Analyze your education experience here as they relate to gender</p>	Gender Speak	Both
<p>ENG/WMST 444</p> <p>1. First 3 Papers: gives 7 options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore new possibilities that a fem theory opens up for you; • Discuss problems/concern 1 fem theory opens up for you; • Consider the practical 	<p>Feminist Critical Theory</p> <p>(Rhetorical Theory)</p>	Syllabus

<p>application..;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how your experiences speak to one feminist theory; (primary research) • Synthesize 2-3 theories; • Work through a section of text that confused you; • Experiment w a fem theory of writing by composing your essay in the style of one of the writers we've discussed. (creative) <p>2. Memorial Artifact Analysis: what does it mean to remember this woman?</p> <p>3. Final: Revisit 1 of the first 4 projects: elaborate, engage her comments, and revise</p>		
<p>WRT/QSX 422</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Writing on LGBT Outside-Class Event, includes CNF in response (primary research & original creative writing) 2. Public Reading of Work at end-of-semester 3. Final Portfolio (syllabus includes 69 CNF writing prompts) (portfolios) 	<p>Studies in Creative NonFiction: 'Stranger than Fiction': LGBT CNF</p>	<p>Syllabus</p>
<p>WRT 308</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revised Text (revised a previous academic essay) & Self-Assessment Essay (analysis of revision) 2. Portfolio 	<p>Advanced Writing Studio: Stylistic Choices & Voices</p>	<p>Both</p>
<p>ENG 3396</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raising & Defending a Good Question about Gender & Rhetorical Education (use 1+ class readings to develop and propose a good question) 	<p>Special Topics: Gender & Writing</p>	<p>Both</p>
<p>ENG 3135</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sequential Narrative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic Proposal (in-process writing) 	<p>"A Critically Comic Approach to Visual Rhetoric"</p>	<p>Syllabus, From website</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prezi Collage (digital poster) & Rhetorical analysis • Annotated Bib • 3 min work-in-progress Report (in-process writing) • The Comic Narrative (original creative writing) • Rhet Analysis: explaining choices in comic • Presentation 		
Professional Writing		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Client Profile Assignment (primary research focused) 2. Working Agreement (contract for terms of working on a grant with a client) [established it as a proposal..?] 3. Funder Profile Worksheet (Analysis of a potential funder and essentially an application to that funder) 4. Grant for a Non-for-Profit (only under professional writing category) 	<p>Grant Writing</p> <p>An online grant writing class that is a community service class</p>	Both Digital course, assignments discussed in class lecture notes
Graduate Level Courses		
<p>ENG 8318</p> <p>4 assignments in syllabus, gave 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflection on Scholarship & Disciplinarity (scholarly genealogy and theoretical influences) 	<p>Research Seminar in Rhetoric & Composition II</p> <p>Focus: Genre of Academic Writing—the transition to entering academic conversations</p>	Both
<p>ENG 831</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weekly assignments (via course schedule), 1-2 pages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is rhetoric? • Analyze 1 small section from reading. • Apply wonder, intellectual curiosity, and/or theoretical playfulness to these readings. • Analyze something you encounter in everyday life using these readings. 	<p>Rhetoric II</p> <p>A contemporary rhetorics class that focuses on what's stayed, and what's been added or revised in terms of key concepts and theories</p>	From website: assignment descriptions in the syllabus or schedule

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to how ppl interact in a context of your choosing and draw on Ratcliffe • In this critical-creative piece, write an analysis of your body and/r embodiment that is informed by the ideas in these readings <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. 8-10 pg. <u>manifesto</u> about some aspect of contemporary rhetorical studies (examination of a problem followed by a future-oriented, passionate exploration of an alternative way forward) 3. Recast manifesto as a Pecha Kucha presentation 		
<p>CCR 760/WGS 700</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Readings Discussion Leader 2. Present your writing (to class) 3. 10 item annotated bib focused on narrative theory and practice within your discipline 4. participate in a final class reading 5. completes a substantial and significant piece of writing that integrates the theory and practice of feminist narratives in the context of your ongoing scholarly work. <p>Includes 70 at home writing prompts</p>	Feminist Narratives: Theory & Practice	Syllabus
<p>ENG 85024</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Course Project w Parts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual conference w some writing about interests (not counting as an individual assignment) • Conference <u>Proposal</u>: research question and proposal for a real conference • Research practices presentation: a 5 minute video that captures your 	<p>Domain Rhetorics & The Construction of Knowledge: or, Language and the Social Construction of Difference</p> <p>(Begins w feminist theories)</p>	Both

<p>research process (what normally is invisible) [marked as: video; presentation; and reflection on writing process]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-in-Progress Presentation: a multi-modal conference-type presentation (presentation; multimodal; secondary research) 		
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APPENDIX C | Findings: Feminist Texts Referenced

Below is a list of all of the texts that were referenced in assignments and coded as “feminist texts.” Being coded as a feminist text means either that the author is consciously engaging with feminist theory, pedagogy, methods, or arguments, or that the text might be used or taught in a women’s or feminist rhetorics class. The full reference is given only when an assignment clearly specified a particular title; in other words, many of the texts referenced as having been read/studied as feminist or women’s rhetorics only provided an author’s name.

Feminist Texts Referenced

- Adkins, Becca.
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- Alaimo, Stacy. “Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature.” *Material Feminisms*. Eds. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.
- Anthony, Susan B.
- Anzaldua, Gloria.
- Appledore, Carolanne.
- Bader Ginsberg, Ruth.
- Beasley, Chris. *Gender & Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*. London: SAGE, 2005.
- De Beauvoir, Simone.
- Behar, Ruth.
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- Cady Stanton, Elizabeth.
- Cixous, Helene.
- Combahee River Collective.
- Cruz, Lexy.
- Day, Dorothy.
- Dworkin, Andrea.
- Fleming, Margaret.
- Foss, Karen, Sonja Foss, and Cindy Griffin. “Rhetoric.” *Feminist Rhetorical Theories*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999. 6-7.
- Foss, Sonja, Karen Foss, and Mary Domenico. *Gender Stories: Negotiating Identity in a Binary World*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2013.
- Fox Keller, Evelyn.
- Fox-Stowe, Jessica.
- Fuller, Margaret.
- Grimke, Sarah.
- Grimke Weld, Angelina.

Goldman, Emma.

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 149-181.

Harper, Frances E. W.

hooks, bell. "Clarity: Give Love Words." *All About Love: New Visions*. New York: Perennial, 2001. 1-14.

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Horist, Makenzie.

Ivins, Molly.

Jordan, Barbara.

Jordan, June.

Kipnis, Laura. *Against Love: A Polemic*. UK: Vintage, 2003.

Kipnis, Laura. "Reader Advisory" and "Love's Labors." *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. 9th ed. Eds. Bartholomae, David and Anthony Petrosky. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.

Laborde, Veronica.

Lappin, Carly.

Lou Hamer, Fannie.

Minha-ha, Trinh.

Muller, Taylor.

Neal Hurston, Zora.

Norris, Rebecca.

Parker, Hayley.

Payne, Allie.

Perkins Gilman, Charlotte.

Quintero, Sofia. "The Rap(p)er." Black Artemis Multimedia, 2013. EPUB file.

Ratcliffe, Krista. *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*. Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006.

Rich, Addrienne.

Richards, Ann.

Robertson, Caisey.

Royal, Rebecca.

Schlaflly, Phyllis.

Shelburne, Sarah.

Smith, Barbara.

Smith, Jessica.

Snider, Amy.

Steinem, Gloria.

Takayoshi, Pamela and Katrina M. Powell. "The Ethics of Reciprocity." *CCC* 54.3 (2003): 394-422.

Talpade Mohanty, Chandra.

Truth, Sojourner.

Tyler, Alex.

Wallach Scott, Joan. *The Politics of the Veil*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Wandersee, Libby.
Wells, Ida B.
Williams, Patricia.
Williams, Tempest.
Woolf, Virginia.

APPENDIX D | Interview Questions

These are the initial questions that were approved by Syracuse University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). They were used as a starting place for the interviews with the five participating teachers. For each individual interview, however, I developed specific questions based on the participant's submitted assignments and/or syllabi.

1. Describe the pedagogy and teaching philosophy that informs the way you taught this course and assignment?
2. In what ways did feminism or feminist pedagogy inform the way you taught this class and this assignment?
3. In your own words, describe the writing assignment that you contributed to this research study.
4. What made you decide to contribute this particular assignment to this research study?
5. Do you consider yourself to be a feminist teacher? Why or why not?
6. What feminist values or concepts do you see guiding this particular assignment? Are there any particular theorists or thinkers that influenced the way you designed this course or assignment?
7. Describe what you remember of your thought process, planning, and the curricular/institutional context that influenced the design of this writing assignment.
8. How does this writing assignment fit into the trajectory of the writing class it was in?
9. How does this writing assignment and course fit into the larger curriculum of the institution you are teaching at?
10. Do you consciously attempt to connect your writing assignments to the ideologies of your pedagogy?
11. What are some of the possibilities that you have experienced in teaching this particular feminist writing assignment?
12. What are some of the pitfalls that you have experienced in teaching this feminist writing assignment?
13. Are there other comments you would like to make about this assignment or course or your experiences with giving writing assignments?

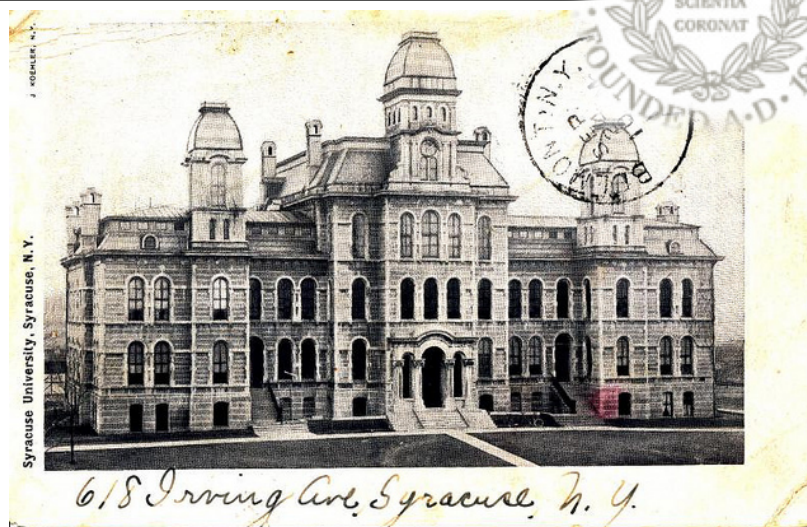
APPENDIX E | Research Writing Syllabus & Assignments

Research, History & You

WRT 303 | Advanced Writing Studio: Research & Writing

Spring 2013 | M,W 12:45-2:05 | HBC 035

Instructor: Kate
Navickas
Office: HBC 002
Office Hours:
Wednesdays 11:30-
12:30
Phone: 607.759.8872
Email:
kenavick@syr.edu



Basic Course Information⁴⁰

Required Readings

Arndt, Chris, Raymond Hyser, and Michael Galgano. *Doing History: Research & Writing in the Digital Age*. Boston, MA : Thomson Wadsworth, 2008. *available in the SU bookstore

Catalog Course Description

WRT 303: Research and Writing: Sustained research and writing project in a student's field of study or area of interest. Analysis of the rhetorics and methodologies of research.

Course Description

As a student at Syracuse University, what are the histories that have come before you? How can you tap into those histories and access them? What are the connections between student histories at SU and the relevant issues that matter to you today? In this class, we will conduct research that develops out of your position as a Syracuse University student and draws on the legacy of SU students that have come before you. As a class, we will ask—why do student

⁴⁰ Pictures Used: Syracuse Logo: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/techweet/5399489524/in/photostream/>
Syracuse Postcard: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/fresnel10/sets/72157625832543043/>

histories matter? and, how can you utilize student histories to inform your thinking today? As we collectively uncover SU student histories and make meaningful links to our contemporary moment, we will also be making our research matter by making it public through two venues. First, we will all be contributing articles to an existing Wiki that explores the Syracuse area: www.syrguide.com (in Unit 2). Second, for the final class project, you will each be locating real SU audiences and creating research products that will be given to those audiences—in order to create a concrete understanding of how and why a specific history matters.

In order to tackle these guiding questions, we will learn about and conduct different types of primary and secondary research. We will map out and explore the many different documents, archives, stacks, and materials on SU student histories that Bird Library houses. As you develop individual research projects based on your interests, we will discuss the most effective research options for the project as well as the research methods necessary for conducting the research. In addition to archival research, you will conduct qualitative primary research that speak to your projects. We will also (re)familiarize ourselves with the library databases and discover successful secondary research strategies for finding scholarship that is generative to our thinking about our research areas. While you are individually conducting primary and secondary research, we will also be exploring the rhetorics of research and research methodologies. We will investigate various research purposes, contexts, ethics, methodologies, and audiences in order to better understand our own research processes and projects.

Writing Program Course Objectives⁴¹

Writing 303 will focus on the practice, discussion, and critical analysis of researched writing:

- Students will develop, design, and produce over the semester a sustained research project on a topic related to their discipline or derived from other areas of interest (e.g., a 30 page research paper, a series of documents designed
- Students will examine rhetorical matters of audience, style, mode of proof as an integral part of completing their project(s).
- Students will do activities as a class to learn more about how research and writing occur in specific communities (e.g., mock editorial boards, interviews with professionals in their field)
- Students will write formally and informally in a range of genre as they conduct research, experiment with claims and formats, shape material for specific audiences, and polish the final product(s)

Writing 303 will teach the skills, conventions, and aims of researched writing:

- Students will access and assess an array of source information and genres, such as library research, databases, Boolean searches, field or observational research.
- Students will use conventions of citation and document design that meet disciplinary or community standards for credible presentation.

⁴¹ As detailed on the Writing Program website: <http://wrt.syr.edu/pub/handbook/wrt303.html>

- Students will learn modes for publishing their research relevant to their projects (e.g., print, online, multimedia).
- Students will edit their own and their peers' work, appropriate to context and conventions and occasion.

Writing 303 will provide a theoretical framework for researched writing:

- Students will study how research is conducted in various disciplines and fields (e.g., as inquiry, analysis, investigation, or problem-solving).
- Students will study research as a social practice--as rhetorical--and take up questions such as the construction of objectivity, bias, and ethics.
- Students will study the social contexts, conventions, and values of the discipline or field within which they are writing.

Grade Breakdown

Semester-Long Assignments:

Attendance & Participation_____	10%
Research Blog-Log_____	10%

Unit Assignments:

Unit 1—	
Sustained Research Project Proposal_____	25%
Unit 2—	
SyrGuide Wiki Article_____	25%
Unit 3—	
Research Product_____	20%
Letter to Audience_____	10%

Semester-Long Expectations

Attendance & Participation (10%)

Since this course focuses on language learning practices, and since language is learned in communities, it is essential that you attend class and participate. Your absences will affect your classmates' work as well as your own. All the work is designed to develop your research skills and will feed directly into your writing. If you miss the equivalent of three weeks of classes or more without any official documented excuse you will not be able to pass the course. I don't anticipate any of you will be in that position, however, so let's all agree to do the work, come to class, learn a lot, and make the course a meaningful experience. If you must miss a class, you must remain in touch with me via email. Additionally, any class notes that are used will be dated and posted on blackboard. If you miss class, you will be expected to review class notes on blackboard and complete all missed work.

Research Blog-Log (10%)

All students will have individual blogs that are connected through the class website. You will be expected to **write one blog entry per week** throughout the entire semester. The blogs will function primarily as a means of reflecting on and critically engaging with your own individual research project and the progress you make with it. Some weeks I will announce specific blogging prompts for reflection, while other weeks I will establish open-topic blogging assignments that will ask you to reflect on your developing research project—whether that be current questions, challenges, exciting discoveries, or other important aspects of the research process. More than being a reflection on your research process though, the blogs will also be a place where you write summaries of important secondary sources, synthesize secondary sources, investigate primary research ideas, and test out your developing thinking regarding your research topic. Collectively, we will establish **blogging groups** based off of your research interests. The groups will be responsible for responding to each others' blogs and keeping up with each others' developing research projects. As a class, we will determine guidelines and logistics for responding to your group's blogs. **In order to get full credit for your blogs, you cannot miss more than one.**

Major Assignments

The descriptions of assignments below function to explain the assignments and the trajectory of this advanced research class. Essentially, you will develop and conduct a semester long research project chosen from your individual research interests. The basic unit trajectory begins with archival research and locating research questions, moves to secondary and qualitative primary research that results in the publication of historical findings, and concludes with the creation of a research product that focuses on specific research audiences. Below is a more thorough explanation of how each unit works towards the unit assignments and develops an understanding of research rhetorics and methodologies.

Unit 1—(5 weeks) | **Assignment: Sustained Research Project Proposal (25%)**

In the first unit, you will be introduced to the course inquiry on SU student histories through an in-depth exploration of the archives. As we collectively map out the many available archives and materials that Bird Library houses on SU student histories, you will be challenged to locate your own research interests and relevant contemporary student issues. The bulk of this unit will be devoted to learning about archival research and library resources, locating individual research areas and questions, and understanding the course inquiry and trajectory. The unit's work will culminate in a sustained research proposal in which you will tell the story of how you came to a research area and topic through the preliminary archival research while also establishing a research agenda and questions.

Unit 2— (6 weeks) | **Assignment: SyrGuide Wiki Article (25%)**

In the second unit, you will be conducting research while we discuss the value of making research available to a wider audience. In the beginning of this unit, you may be following through with any individual archival research that will need to be completed and then you will

continue to develop your project through secondary and qualitative primary research. Additionally, as a class we will be considering the audiences for different kinds of research and what it means to make research available to a wider, more popular audience. We will spend some time considering the how-to's of wiki writing as well as the specific rhetorical context of the wiki SyrGuide. Collectively, we will determine the scope of the SyrGuide wiki articles that you will be required to write as well as how they are arranged, tagged, and other project details.

Unit 3— (4 weeks) | **Assignment: Research Product (20%) & Letter to an Audience (10%)**

In Unit 3, you will be creating a very concrete response to our course question—*why does this specific SU student history matter?* The Research Product will require you first to locate a very specific SU audience, such as a student organization, campus office, or department, that might be interested in your research on an SU student history. Then, you will create a “research product” that the selected audience might use—anything from a short, informative video or podcast, to a power point, or a brochure, flier, or photo history. As our end goal will be to actually give these products to these audiences, the second part of the assignment will task you to write a 1-2 page letter to the audience that succinctly and professionally presents your research, your product, and a persuasive case for why this audience might benefit from the product. Thus, throughout Unit 3, as a class we will be investigating potential audiences, brainstorming various product genres, and discussing why these specific SU student histories matter.

Policies & Resources

Email & Contacting: We'll be communicating often and submitting assignments through email: kenavick@syr.edu. This requires students to check their email often. When emailing me, in addition to any other brief note you'd like to add, **please create specific subject-lines that suggest either what you are requesting or what you are sending.** For example, every time you send me a final paper for this class your subject line should read: WRT 303: Your-Last-Name Final Unit 3 Essay. If you are writing with an urgent question, please indicate so in the subject line: WRT 303-Urgent Question! Additionally, please *do not* send attachments (homework or assignments) to me by replying to old emails; instead, use a fresh, new email to send attachments—this ensures your work will not be lost. Additionally, I encourage you to come see me during office hours throughout the semester. If you are unable to meet with me during office hours, please see me before or after class or send me an email so that we can arrange an appointment. Please do not hesitate to meet with me to talk about your work several times during the semester. I am also available for Skype, gmail IM, and phone meetings. Please email me your screen names and/or phone number and I will contact you at my earliest convenience. However, please allow approximately 24 hours for all responses.

Student Writing: All texts written in this course are generally public. You may be asked to share them with a peer, the class, or with me during classroom activities or for homework. You will also be asked to sign a consent form requesting the use of your writing for professional

development, teacher training, and classroom instruction within the Syracuse University Writing Program.

The Writing Center: Writing Consultants are available to work with you at any stage of your writing process and with any kind of writing you're creating. Whether you need help understanding an assignment, brainstorming ideas, revising subsequent drafts, or developing editing strategies, face-to-face and online chat appointments are available throughout the semester. Appointments can be reserved up to six days in advance via their online scheduling program, WOnline. In addition, drop-in appointments are welcome Monday through Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and brief concerns, questions, or drafts (max of 5 pages) can be emailed to consultants via their eWC service. This is a free resource to all students and recommended for all writing assigned in this class.

Disabilities Statement: Students who need accommodations for a disability must first contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS): ODS information can be found at <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, and the office is located in Room 309 of 804 University Ave., (315)-443-4498. ODS verify a student's disabilities on a case by case basis in order to provide individual students the appropriate accommodations and access necessary. In order to ensure access to the necessary accommodations immediately, please contact ODS as early as possible.

Academic Integrity: The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy⁴² holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort.

SU's religious observances policy⁴³, found at the link below, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. You must work with your professor's demands to make up missed work in a timely manner. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

⁴² For more information and the complete policy, see the [Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures \(PDF\)](http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/) at <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/>.

⁴³ http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm <http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm

Research Product & Letter—for a Real Audience

WRT 303 | Advanced Writing Studio: Research & Writing | Assignment 3



Throughout the first two units of this semester, you have engaged in a substantial sustained research project that required archival, ethnographic, and secondary research. You have located a specific SU student history of interest, gathered documents and data, read supplemental information, analyzed your findings, and determined your project's research contexts within a particular disciplinary trajectory. Now, you are the expert on your specific research area and SU student history!

ASSIGNMENT PART I—*The Research Product*

In Unit 3, we will attempt to create a very concrete answer to the question driving this course: *why and how do SU student histories matter?* While we have been talking generally as a class about this question all semester, this unit you will be required to answer the question more precisely for your own specific research project and SU student history. The first part of the work of this unit, then, will be locating a specific contemporary audience that would benefit from your research. For instance, you will need to determine what SU student group, such as a specific fraternity, student organization, religious group, etc., or SU office or department, such as the library, student affairs, admissions, etc., would be interested in your research findings on a specific institutional history. Then, *after* you have chosen an audience, you will create a research product for that specific audience that makes your research findings useful for that audience. Your “research product” can be anything from an informative or creative video, a podcast, a power point, a collage, a brochure, a flier, a pamphlet, a photo history or timeline, or Daily Orange article. There are no limitations on what your product can be; however, your decision about the product should be directly related to what your specific, selected audience might actually use. As our end goal is to give these products to the selected audiences, you will need to justify why the type of product you chose to create is useful for that audience.

ASSIGNMENT PART II—A Letter to the Audience

The second, written part of the Unit 3 research product assignment is a letter to the selected audience. As research products will be given to the audiences you select, part of the project will be to write a letter to the audience that introduces your research project, your research product, and explains why you believe this audience might find this research product useful. The letter will need to be succinct and make a persuasive case for why this particular SU student history (and the product) will be useful to this specific audience. Part of this work will involve knowing your audience; thus, you will probably need to do a bit of research about the organization you've selected and maybe even do some initial contacting with people in the organization (or audience). The letter should be no more than two pages, one full page (single spaced) is the minimum. The letter will need to conform to standard letter genre conventions.

For this Unit 3 Assignment, you should have fun and be creative! Try to draw on your resources—skills and connections that you have already developed or are related to your individual major. While we will talk a great deal about the specifics of the assignment and evaluation criteria, I will be assessing these projects based on how they meet and respond to the following questions:

- Does the research product genre (video, podcast, etc) effectively respond to the selected audience? In other words, is the product choice and design something that the audience will use and find valuable?
- Does the research product and letter suggest that an appropriate audience has been selected? And, does the research product and letter respond to the needs and desires of the audience?
- Does the letter effectively and professionally make a persuasive argument as to why this particular SU student history and the accompanying product matter? Especially to the specific audience?
- Are the research product and letter of a final product quality that is ready to send to the audience?

Essay Assignment Details—

**As the nature of this assignment will vary for each project, we will discuss assignment details and goals together collectively, and then, our outcomes will be added and posted on the class blog.*

The Unit 3 Research Product and Letter are due on **Wednesday May 8th** by midnight by email (kenavick@syr.edu). The Research Product is 20% of your final grade and the accompanying Letter is 10% of your grade.

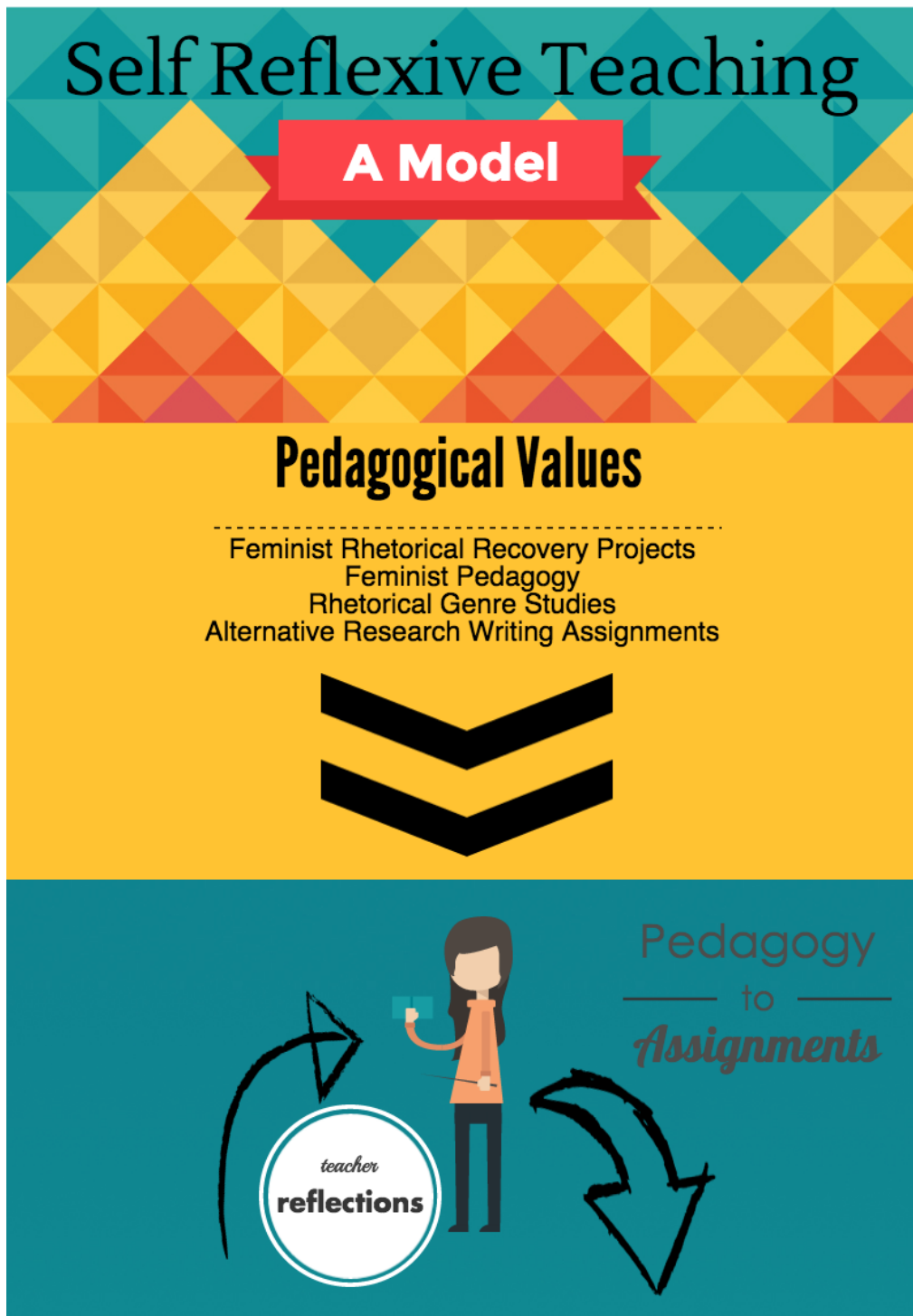
Images:

SU Postcard Image: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/fresnel10/5408901719/in/photostream/>

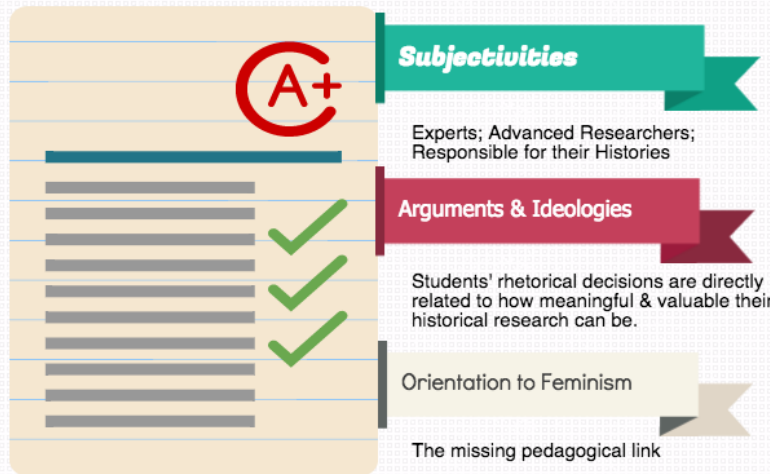
Research image: <http://timetoeatthedogs.com/category/book-review/>

APPENDIX F | *Infographic: A Model of Self-Reflexive Praxis*

Infographic can also be found at: http://www.knavickas.com/?page_id=425



Assignment Text



The graphic features a central illustration of a girl with brown hair in a ponytail, wearing glasses and a blue shirt, holding a small book. Above her, the word 'invention' is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with '& WRITING' in a smaller font below it. To the left of the girl is a large, stylized black arrow pointing upwards and to the right. To the right is a large, stylized black arrow pointing upwards and to the left. Below the girl, the words 'Student Reflections' are written in a cursive font, with three thick black chevrons pointing downwards. To the right of the girl, a white circle with a black border contains the text 'Student UPTAKE' in a bold, sans-serif font. The entire graphic is set against a teal background.

invention
& WRITING

Student Reflections

Student UPTAKE

"At first I wasn't sure how relevant it would be for us to present our work in a way different from the SyrGuide [the second Wiki assignment], but after finishing my project, I have concluded that we were forced to find the best audience for our history as well as the best way to present our research to this specific audience; something I never really gave much thought to in the past. Honestly, being given the freedom to choose what we did with our research was actually pretty hard- I'm used to having very strict guidelines for a final project, so by having to think outside of the box and be creative, I think I was challenged significantly."

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education

Expected: Feb. 2016	Ph.D., Composition and Cultural Rhetorics Syracuse University Dissertation: "The Epistemologies They Carry: An Investigation of Feminist Writing Assignments" Committee: Eileen E. Schell (Chair), Rebecca Moore Howard, Lois Agnew, Gwendolyn Pough By studying writing assignments from a national pool of feminist writing teachers, I analyze the extent to which feminist principles emerge in such texts. Supported with teacher interviews and an autoethnographic account of my own teaching, I argue that pedagogical values are not always visible, and that writing assignments are one pedagogical site in which teachers can more closely attend to how epistemological understandings shape student literacies.
May 2009	M.A., English Literature: Concentration in Rhetoric and Composition Binghamton University Thesis: "Feminism and Composition: A Pedagogy for First-Year Composition" Advisor: Rebecca Moore Howard
May 2006	B.A., English Literature & Music Performance SUNY Fredonia

academic positions

Spring 2016	Instructor, SUNY Cortland
2014-Present	Editor: Graduate Editing Center, Syracuse University
2010-2014	Teaching Assistant, Syracuse University
2012-2014	Writing Center Tutor, Syracuse University
June 2010-2015	ETS AP Exam Reader, Louisville, Kentucky
2011-2012	Graduate TA Training Consultant, Syracuse University
Spring 2010	Writing Center Director, Binghamton University
2008-2010	Teaching Assistant, Binghamton University

research & teaching interests

Feminism; Feminist Rhetorics & Pedagogy; Composition Theory, Pedagogy & History; Rhetorical Genre Studies; Research Writing; Writing Across the Curriculum; Writing Center Pedagogies; Citation Project & Plagiarism; Social Justice Issues; Professional Writing; Digital Writing; Rhetorical History; Contemporary Rhetorics; Methods & Methodologies

publications

Navickas, Kate. "Teaching for Liberation: Lessons from Minnie Bruce Pratt." *Pedagogy*. (In Progress)

Navickas, Kate. Associate Editor. *The 2015 Best of Independent Rhetoric and Composition Journals*. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press. 2016. (Forthcoming)

Navickas, Kate. "Episode 10: Interview with Rebecca Dingo." *This Rhetorical Life*, a multimedia podcast. 16 July 2013. <http://thisrhetoricallife.syr.edu/episode-10-interview-with-rebecca-dingo/>

Navickas, Kate. Associate Editor. *Listening to Our Elders: Working and Writing for Change*. Philadelphia, PA: New City Community Press, 2011.

teaching experience

SUNY Cortland

The Teaching of Writing | AED 408

Instructor, Spring 2016

AED 408 is an introduction to composition theory and pedagogy course geared towards juniors and seniors for the teaching of writing in middle and secondary schools. The course emphasizes writing theory as well as instructional strategies, curriculum planning and assessment techniques.

Syracuse University

The Warrior Scholar Project

Instructor, July 13-17, 2015

The Warrior Scholar Project is a one-week intensive reading and writing college-prep course for Veterans contemplating higher education. As co-teacher, I developed a curriculum that moved quickly through narrative, analysis, summary, and synthesis in order to introduce students to academic writing. I also led afternoon writing workshops that encouraged peer review and revision.

Technical & Professional Writing | WRT 307

Instructor, Fall-Spring 2013-14

WRT 307 is an advanced writing studio in which students analyze and practice professional communication through the study of audience, purpose, and ethics. The course teaches rhetorical problem-solving principles and emphasizes the role of digital technologies in the contemporary, global workplace.

Research & Writing: Research, History, & You | WRT 303

Instructor, Spring 2013

WRT 303 is an advanced writing studio on research methods and rhetorics that is part of the Writing Program's genre-based upper-division courses. Through an inquiry into Syracuse University student histories, the class introduced students to the Syracuse University archives, traditional secondary research, and primary qualitative research (interviews and observations).

Theory and Strategy for the Teaching of Writing | WRT 670

Consultant & Instructor, Fall-Spring 2011-12

WRT 670 is a year-long teaching practicum for TAs teaching lower-division writing courses. The TAs are graduate students from the English Department and Composition and Cultural Rhetoric. As consultant and instructor, I planned and led the week's activities for a small group of TAs, facilitated group discussions, helped TAs learn the

Writing Program's lower-division curriculum, created teaching resources, and directed grade norming sessions. Further, I was responsible for TA observations and assessment. As part of the position, I contributed to the revision of the second-year curriculum (the trajectory, assignments, and heuristics).

Critical Research & Inquiry | WRT 205

Race in American Culture & Language | Fall 2012

Sex & Sexuality in Pop Culture | Spring 2012

Gender in Pop Culture | Spring 2011

WRT 205 is a second-semester, research-based writing requirement that focuses on research methods, primary and secondary research, and evaluating and working with sources. I have taught and designed three different versions of WRT 205 (listed above). The basic trajectory for WRT 205 moves students from engaging with a set of shared readings and doing critical summaries, to developing research questions and research, to an argument essay. Throughout, the course includes multimodal sources and activities and culminates in a multimodal translation project of the final research argument essay.

Practices of Academic Writing | WRT 105

Acts of Language Resistance | Summer Start 2011

Re-Imagining the Normal | Fall 2010

WRT 105 is the required first-year writing course that introduces students to the conventions, genres, and practices of academic writing. In WRT 105, students learn to do close, critical reading of difficult texts, analyze texts and images, and write summary, analysis, and synthesis. The Summer Start WRT 105 is a scaled down version of the course that is geared towards a diverse group of pre-college basic writing students. As the instructor, I utilized and adapted a shared curriculum, facilitated classroom discussions, activities, assessed homework and formal writing, and conferenced with students.

Binghamton University

Practicum in College Teaching | WRIT 491

Writing Center Director, Spring 2010

WRIT 491 is a required course for all Binghamton University tutors. The course provides writing center tutors the opportunity to learn good tutoring practices through readings, discussions, and mock-tutor sessions. The students are a select group of Binghamton University seniors who have been hired to tutor in the writing center.

Coming to Voice: First-Year Composition | WRIT 111

Instructor, Fall 2009

WRIT 111 is a required FYC course that uses a shared syllabus and portfolio assessment system. Using a Genre Studies approach, the civic writing inquiry included

the following assignments: a personal narrative, Op-Ed, rhetorical analysis, and a researched argument.

As the instructor, I adapted the common syllabus to the needs of each particular class, developed activities, facilitated classroom discussions, held office hours, attended weekly faculty pedagogy meetings, and assessed student work.

GRE Verbal Preparation

Instructor, Fall 2009

The GRE Verbal Prep course is a short, intensive study of the verbal sections of the GRE taught through the BU McNair Scholars Program. In weekend classes, students become familiar with the issue and argument analytical writing tasks by examining sample prompts, ETS's scoring rubrics, benchmark sample essays, organizational tactics for approaching the questions, and taking practice writing tests.

Educational Opportunity Program

Instructor, Summer 2009

The E.O.P. summer writing course introduces potential first-year students to the demands and expectations of college-level writing. The version of the writing course I offered focused on literacy practices and the main assignment was a researched literacy narrative.

Oral Communication | RHET 246

Instructor, Fall 2008- Spring 2009

RHET 246 is a general-education course that teaches students to develop effective oral communication skills. The course took a genre-based approach to teaching oral communications, tasking students to write and perform speeches that were informative, persuasive, personal, and political.

Academic Writing Workshop | WRIT 100

Teaching Tutor, Fall 2008

WRIT 100 is a small writing workshop in which students met once a week to work on their writing for the first-year composition course.

Humor in the Media | ENG 300V

Teaching Assistant, Spring 2008

Humor in the Media is an English course elective which examines humor in popular culture through the media, social networking sites, and novels. The students are Binghamton University juniors and seniors. I was responsible for attending class, taking attendance, holding office hours and grading student essays.

awards & honors

2014	Certificate in University Teaching. The Graduate School, Syracuse University.
2013	Outstanding TA Award. The Graduate School, Syracuse University.
2013	Certificate of Advanced Study in Women & Gender Studies. Women & Gender Studies Department, Syracuse University.
2012-2013	Composition & Cultural Rhetoric Summer Research Grant. The Writing Program, Syracuse University.
2012-2014	Travel Grant. The Graduate Student Organization, Syracuse University.
2009	Certificate in College Teaching: Composition. The Writing Initiative, Binghamton University.
2008	S. Stewart Gordon Memorial Scholarship: Academic Excellence. Binghamton University.
2002-6	Fredonia Incentive Grant: Academic Excellence. SUNY Fredonia.
2003	Honors Award. SUNY Fredonia.

presentations

Workshops

- Writing Workshop: "STEM Cover Letters & Research Statements." Workshop for the Women in Science and Engineering's Future Professionals and Professoriate Program (Wise-FPP). Syracuse University, March 2015.
- Writing Workshop: "Public Narrative and Writing Centers: Stories of Self, of Us, of Now." International Writing Centers Association Collaborative at the Conference on College Composition and Communication: St. Louis, MO. March 2012.
- Workshop Facilitator. *The Citation Project*: "Understanding Students' Use of Sources through Collaborative Research." Conference on College Composition and Communication: St. Louis, MO. March 2012.
- Workshop Facilitator. *The Citation Project*: "Understanding Students' Use of Sources through Collaborative Research." Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy: Savannah, GA. September 2010.

International & National Presentations

- "Designing Student Subjectivities: The Rhetoric of Writing Assignments." *Student Identities in Classroom Contexts: Negotiating Subjectivity and Power*. Conference on College Composition and Communication: Houston, TX. April 2016.
- "Rhetorical Reading 101." Invited speaker for a graduate course on "Composition Pedagogies." Arkansas State University, January 2015.

- "Feminist Writing Assignments: A Site for Transgression (?)" *Seeking Transgressive Teaching: Love and Labor in the Feminist Classroom*. National Women Studies Association Conference: San Juan, Puerto Rico. November 2014.
- "Student Interpretations of Assignments: Locating Pedagogical Ideologies." *Still "Doing School": The Rules of Engagement in the Local, Global and Digital Landscapes of Composition*. Conference on College Composition and Communication: Indianapolis, IN. March 2014.
- "Theorizing Feminist Writing Assignments: Locating Student Histories in the Archives." *Archives, Oral Histories, and Pedagogies*. Feminisms & Rhetorics: Stanford University, September 2013.
- "Undergraduate Archival Research: Recovering Student Histories." *Student Histories Matter: Archival Research in the Composition Class*. Conference on College Composition and Communication: Las Vegas, NV. March 2013.
- "Theorizing (Feminist) Writing Assignments." Workshop Participant for *Why Feminisms Still Matter in the 21st Century: Mentoring, Community, Collaboration and Feminist Agency in Interdisciplinary Feminist Discourse*. Conference on College Composition and Communication: Las Vegas, NV. March 2013.
- "Genre, Mentorship, and the Liminal Space of Publication." *Genre-Based Graduate Pedagogy: Textual Spaces and Scholarly Identifications*. Genre 2012: Rethinking Genre 20 Years Later. Carleton University, June 2012.
- "White Feminist Teachers as Racial Allies: Extending Welch's "Rhetoric from Below"" *Affect, Embodiment, and the Tensions of "Unruly Rhetorical" Writing Pedagogy*. Conference on College Composition and Communication: St. Louis, MO. March 2012.
- "Post-Identity Politics (?): The Ethical Dilemma of Contemporary Feminist Rhetoric Scholars." *Decolonizing Fem-Rhet Nation: Once More Beyond Inclusion and Liberal Tolerance*. Feminisms & Rhetorics: Minnesota State University, October 2011.
- "Civil Disobedience: How FYC Fosters Civic Irresponsibility." *Fresh Perspectives on Plagiarism and Responsibility*. Conference on College Composition and Communication: Atlanta, GA. April 2011.
- "Roundtable with Native and Nonnative English Speaking Writers." Writing Center Series on ESL Writing. Syracuse University, February 2011.
- "The Graduate Writing Center Director: Reflecting on Authority Among Peers." Writing Program Administrators: Philadelphia, PA. July 2010.
- "Fresh Feminisms: Applying Feminist Pedagogy to First-Year Composition." Conference on College Composition and Communication: Louisville, KY. March 2010.
- "Facing Frictions: Training Graduate Instructors in Feminist Pedagogy." Council of Writing Program Administrators: Minneapolis, MN. July 2009.

Local & Institutional Presentations & Invited Talks

- “Having Difficult Conversations in the Classroom.” The Graduate School: Syracuse University, October 2015.
- “Writing Practices Across Situations & Contexts: One WRT 105 Interpretation Using the New Outcomes.” The Writing Program’s Annual Fall Conference: Syracuse University, August 2015.
- “Toward a Model of Feminist Self-Reflexive Praxis.” *Literacy, Pedagogy, & Practices: Looking at In-Class Methods for Engaging in Feminist, Ethical, and Intersectional Research*. The First Annual Jeannette K. Watson Graduate Symposium: Syracuse University, April 2015.
- “Developing Upper-Division Archival Writing Courses.” Invited speaker for a graduate course on “Writing, Rhetoric and Technologies.” Syracuse University, March 2015.
- “Studying Feminist Writing Assignments.” 3-Minute Thesis Competition: Syracuse University, February 2014.
- “Feminist Pedagogy in Composition: Jacqueline Rhodes’ *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency*.” Invited speaker for a graduate course on “Composition Pedagogies.” Syracuse University, November 2013.
- “Connecting Research & Teaching: Making the Most of CCR Teaching Opportunities.” CCR Visiting Days Pedagogy Talk. Syracuse University, March 2013.
- “Tips for Developing a Writing 205 Course Inquiry.” TA Training Panel. Syracuse University, December 2012.
- “Research Report: Attending & Presenting at an International Conference.” CCR Community Day. Syracuse University, August 2012.
- “I have a Dream...for the Future of Writing Studies.” Position Statement for the Writing Program’s Spring Conference. Syracuse University, April 2012.
- “Paper Use is a Social Justice Issue.” *Working Towards the Paperless Classroom*. Writing Program Professional Development Event. Syracuse University, September 2011.
- “Vulnerability Narratives: Heuristics for Teacher Growth.” *Treating Pedagogical Failures as Blunders: Material and Ideological Constraints of Graduate Teaching Assistants*. SUNY Council on Writing Conference: Binghamton University, March 2011.

administration & service

- 2015-16 | **Writing Program Curricular Consultant.** Syracuse University. Developing curriculum for WRT 205 (a required second semester research writing course) across four topic clusters (Ethics & Civic Discourse; Literacy & Language; Writing about Science; and Writing & Technology) for pilot courses using new programmatic outcomes;

	planning professional development events introducing new WRT 205 pilot courses to Writing Program teachers.
2014-Present	<p>Coalition of Women Scholars Task Force. CCCC.</p> <p>Conducting research (surveys & interviews) regarding member and non-member perceptions of the Coalition's mission; reporting findings at CCCC and Feminisms and Rhetorics; working to improve membership and revise mission.</p>
Summer 2014, 2015	<p>Teaching Mentor. University TA Orientation, Syracuse University.</p> <p>Developed introductory presentations for new TAs; worked with a small group of new TAs and then new international TAs to familiarize them to the campus and teaching expectations; assessed international TAs for conversational language abilities.</p>
Summer 2013	<p>Community Day Planner. Composition & Cultural Rhetorics, Syracuse University.</p> <p>Planned activities for the department's community day, a professional and social event welcoming new graduate students and the new academic year; interviewed CCR alumni and created videos on alumni reflections on teaching and research values learned in CCR.</p>
2012-13	<p>Family Issues Committee. The Graduate Student Organization, Syracuse University.</p> <p>Conducted research and worked to develop maternity leave for graduate students at Syracuse University; organized and planned family-oriented events for SU graduate students.</p>
2012-13	<p>Major-Minor Committee. Writing Program, Syracuse University.</p> <p>Revised and developed consistent course descriptions and objectives for Writing Program upper-division courses.</p>
Spring 2012	<p>Assigning, Reading, Responding to, and Grading Student Writing Sub-Committee. Writing Program, Syracuse University.</p> <p>Researched assessment resources and practices; planned assessment workshop series for Writing Program teachers.</p>
2011-12	<p>New TA Training Consultant. Writing Program, Syracuse University.</p> <p>Worked with two Writing Program staff to coordinate and plan the year-long teaching practicum for new TAs from the English Department and Composition & Cultural Rhetorics; revised and developed first and second year curriculum; worked with small group of TAs on their teaching and teaching materials on a weekly basis; observed TAs teaching and submitted observational reports.</p>

2011-12	<p>Lower Division Committee. Writing Program, Syracuse University. Developed several lower-division pilot courses (course trajectories, materials, and advertisements); planned and researched a programmatic assessment initiative; researched and revised programmatic syllabus statement on the use of student writing.</p>
2011-12	<p>Rhetoric Society of America Student Chapter President. Graduate Chapter, Syracuse University. Planned social and professional development events for graduate students in Composition & Cultural Rhetorics and Communication & Rhetorical Studies; worked with faculty mentors to build Syracuse University chapter's mission and to gain status as a Graduate Student Organization.</p>
2011-12	<p>WikiComp Collective. NCTE & CCCC sponsored project, Syracuse University. Developed a collaborative wiki project for graduate students across institutions that encourages collaborative writing and revisions on seminal Composition and Rhetoric scholarly articles; gained permission from original authors for the use of their scholarship; promoted WikiComp project for other graduate students and courses at CCCC.</p>
2011-12	<p>Volunteer Teacher & Tutor. G.E.D. Tutoring Program, Auburn Correctional Facilities. Auburn, NY. Planned and taught writing and literacy lessons with other Syracuse University undergraduate and graduate students; tutored Auburn inmates.</p>
2010-2015	<p>Composition & Cultural Rhetorics Graduate Circle. Syracuse University. Planned social and professional development events for department graduate students; organized and put on a graduate student and community member Conference on Activism, Rhetoric and Research in May 2012; served as the Circle's treasurer for the 2010-12 academic year; served as the Circle's representative to the Syracuse University Graduate Student Organization for the 2012-13 academic year; and, served as the Web Chair for the 2013-14 academic year.</p>
Spring 2010	<p>Writing Center Director. Binghamton University. Administered Binghamton University Writing Center. Responsibilities included interviewing and hiring; scheduling and organizing; advertising and service promotion; and, mentoring, observing, and teaching writing center tutors.</p>
June 2010-2013	<p>ETS AP Reader: ETS English Language AP Exam. Louisville, Kentucky.</p>

Assessed high school writing for the AP English Language Exam through the Educational Testing Service.

editing

Editor 2014-Present	Graduate Editing Center, Syracuse University Editing and administering editing services for interdisciplinary graduate student dissertations, theses, publications, and job materials.
Editorial Board 2009	<i>Binghamton Writes: A Journal of Undergraduate Composition</i> . 2 nd Ed. Plymouth, MI: Hayden-McNeil. 2010.
Fiction Editorial Board 2008-9	<i>Harpur Palate</i> . Binghamton, NY: Binghamton University Department of English, 9.1 (2009).
Editorial Assistant 2007-8	<i>The Broome Review: A Journal of Contemporary Literature</i> . Vestal, NY: The Broome Review, Spring (2008).

professional memberships & affiliations

Conference on College Composition & Communication (CCCC)
Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition (CWSHRC)
Composition & Cultural Rhetoric Graduate Circle, Syracuse University
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
Rhetoric Society of America (RSA)
National Women Studies Association (NWSA)

references

Eileen E. Schell, Associate Professor of Writing & Rhetoric

Director of Graduate Studies

Writing Program, Syracuse University

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